

BALLADS AND POEMS

GEORGE R. SIMS

Emma Wyman
from "Peaceful"
With many good wish
for the Return of Aug 6th

Sims
1842-1922



From a Photograph by A. E. FRADELLE.

Faithfully Yours

Geo R Sims

BALLADS

AND

POEMS.

THE DAGONET BALLADS.
THE BALLADS OF BABYLON.
THE LIFEBOAT AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

GEORGE R. SIMS.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:
JOHN P. FULLER,
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THE

DAGONET BALLADS.

To HENRY SAMPSON,

In recognition of a not uneventful Journalistic Companionship, these Ballads are dedicated by his Friend and Workfellow,

GEORGE R. SIMS.

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THE DAGONET BALLADS.

TOLD TO THE MISSIONARY.

JUST look 'ee here, Mr. Preacher, you re
a-goin' a bit too fur;
There isn't the man as is livin' as I'd let
say a word agen her.
She 's a rum-lookin' bitch, that I own to, and there
is a fierce look in her eyes,
But if any cove sez as she 's vicious, I sez in his
teeth, he lies.
Soh! gently, old 'ooman; come here, now, and set
by my side on the bed;
I wonder who 'll have yer, my beauty, when him as
you 're all to 's dead!

There, stow your perlaver a minit; I knows as my
end is nigh;
Is a cove to turn round on his dog, like, just 'cos he's
goin' to die?

Oh, of course, I was sartin you'd say it. It's allus
the same with you,
Give it us straight now, guv'nor,—what would you
have me do?
Think of my soul? I do, sir. Think of my
Saviour?—Right!
Don't be afeard of the bitch, sir; *she's* not a-goin'
to bite.
Tell me about my Saviour—tell me that tale
agen,
How He prayed for the coves as killed Him, and
died for the worst of men.
It's a tale as I always liked, sir; and bound for the
'ternal shore,
I thinks it aloud to myself, sir, and I likes it more
and more.

I've thumbed it out in the Bible, and I know it now
by heart,
And it's put like steam in my boiler,, and made me
ready to start.

I ain't not afeard to die now; I've been a bit bad
in my day,
But I know when I knocks at them portals there's
One as won't say me nay.
And it's thinkin' about that story, and all as He
did for us,
As makes me so fond o' my dawg, sir, specially
now I'm wus;
For a-savin' o' folks who'd kill us is a beautiful act,
the which
I never heard tell on o' no one, 'cept o' Him and o'
that there bitch.

Yes, you may open yer eyes, sir—but I say by the
Lord it's true!
I ha' told the story often; sit 'e down, while I tell it
to you.
Dang this 'ere coughin', it stops me—it's a cold I
caught last year,
As has tumbled my ninepins over, and lef me
a-dyin' here.
I was out on the drunk and caught it—lor, what a
cuss is drink!—
But there, when a cove's as I am, it don't do him
good to think.
I must cut it yer short, I reckon, for whenever I
tries to speak
I feels like a bloomin' babby—I gets so infernal
weak.

'Twas five years ago come Chrismus, maybe you remember the row,
There was scares about hydryphoby—same as there be just now;
And the bobbies came down on us costers—came in a reggerlar wax,
And them as 'ud got no licence was summerned to pay the tax.
But I had a friend among 'em, and he come in a friendly way,
And he sez, "You must settle your dawg, Bill, unless you've a mind to pay."
The missus was dyin' wi' fever—I'd made a mistake in my pitch,
I *couldn't* afford to keep her, so I sez, "I'll drownd the bitch!"

I wasn't a-goin' to *lose* her, I warn't such a brute, you bet,
As to leave her to die by inches o' hunger, and cold, and wet;
I never said now't to the missus—we both on us liked her well—
But I takes her the follerin' Sunday down to the Grand Canell.
I gets her tight by the collar—the Lord forgive my sin!
And, kneelin' down on the towpath, I ducks the poor beast in.

She gave just a sudden whine like, then a look
come into her eyes
As 'ull last for ever in mine, sir, up to the day I
dies.

And a chill came over my heart then, and thinkin'
I heard her moan,
I held her below the water, beating her skull with
a stone.
You can see the mark of it now, sir—that place on
the top of 'er 'ed—
And sudden she ceased to struggle, and I fancied as
she was dead.
I shall never know how it happened, but goin' to
loose my hold,
My knees slipped over the towpath, and into the
stream I rolled;
Down like a log I went, sir, and my eyes were filled
with mud,
And the water was tinged above me with a mur-
dered creeter's blood.

I gave myself up for lost then, and I cursed in my
wild despair,
And sudden I rose to the surfis, and a su'thing
grabbed my hair—

Grabbed at my hair, and loosed it, and grabbed me
agin by the throat,
And *she* was a-holdin' my 'ed up, and somehow I
kep' afloat.
I can't tell yer 'ow she done it, for I never know'd
no more,
Till somebody seized my collar, and giv' me a lug
ashore;
And my head was queer and dizzy, but I see as the
bitch was weak,
And she lay on her side a-pantin', waitin' for me to
speak.

* * * *

What did I do with *her,* eh? You'd a hardly need
to ax,
But I sold my barrer a Monday, an' paid the
bloomin' tax.

* * * *

That's right, Mr. Preacher, pat her—you ain't not
afeard on her now!—
Dang this here tellin' o' stories—look at the muck
on my brow!

I'm weaker, an' weaker, an' weaker; I fancy the
end ain't fur,
But you know why here on my deathbed I think o'
the Lord and her.

And He who by men's hands tortured uttered that
prayer divine,
'Ull pardon me linkin' Him like with a dawg as
forgave like mine.
When the Lord in His mercy calls me to my last
eternal pitch,
I know as you 'll treat her kindly—promise to take
my bitch!



IN THE WORKHOUSE.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

IT is Christmas Day in the Workhouse,
And the cold bare walls are bright
With garlands of green and holly,
And the place is a pleasant sight:
For with clean-washed hands and faces,
In a long and hungry line
The paupers sit at the tables,
For this is the hour they dine.

And the guardians and their ladies,
Although the wind is east,
Have come in their furs and wrappers,
To watch their charges feast;

To smile and be condescending,
Put pudding on pauper plates,
To be hosts at the workhouse banquet
They've paid for—with the rates.

Oh, the paupers are meek and lowly
With their "Thank'ee kindly, mum's";
So long as they fill their stomachs,
What matter it whence it comes?
But one of the old men mutters,
And pushes his plate aside:
"Great God!" he cries; "but it chokes me!
For this is the day *she* died."

The guardians gazed in horror,
The master's face went white;
"Did a pauper refuse their pudding?"
"Could their ears believe aright?"
Then the ladies clutched their husbands,
Thinking the man would die,
Struck by a bolt, or something,
By the outraged One on high.

But the pauper sat for a moment,
Then rose 'mid a silence grim,
For the others had ceased to chatter,
And trembled in every limb.

He looked at the guardians' ladies,
Then, eyeing their lords, he said,
"I eat not the food of villains
Whose hands are foul and red:

"Whose victims cry for vengeance
From their dank, unhallowed graves."
"He's drunk!" said the workhouse master,
"Or else he's mad, and raves."
"Not drunk or mad," cried the pauper,
"But only a hunted beast,
Who, torn by the hounds and mangled,
Declines the vulture's feast.

"I care not a curse for the guardians,
And I won't be dragged away.
Just let me have the fit out,
It's only on Christmas Day
That the black past comes to goad me,
And prey on my burning brain;
I'll tell you the rest in a whisper,—
I swear I won't shout again.

"Keep your hands off me, curse you!
Hear me right out to the end.
You come here to see how paupers
The season of Christmas spend.

You come here to watch us feeding,
As they watch the captured beast.
Hear why a penniless pauper
Spits on your paltry feast.

"Do you think I will take your bounty,
And let you smile and think
You're doing a noble action
With the parish's meat and drink?
Where is my wife, you traitors—
The poor old wife you slew?
Yes, by the God above us,
My Nance was killed by you!

"Last winter my wife lay dying,
Starved in a filthy den;
I had never been to the parish,—
I came to the parish then.
I swallowed my pride in coming,
For, ere the ruin came,
I held up my head as a trader,
And I bore a spotless name.

"I came to the parish, craving
Bread for a starving wife,
Bread for the woman who'd loved me
Through fifty years of life;

And what do you think they told me,
Mocking my awful grief?
That 'the House' was open to us,
But they wouldn't give 'out relief.'

"I slunk to the filthy alley—
'Twas a cold, raw Christmas eve—
And the bakers' shops were open,
Tempting a man to thieve;
But I clenched my fists together,
Holding my head awry,
So I came to her empty-handed,
And mournfully told her why.

"Then I told her 'the House' was open;
She had heard of the ways of *that,*
For her bloodless cheeks went crimson,
And up in her rags she sat,
Crying, 'Bide the Christmas here, John,
We've never had one apart;
I think I can bear the hunger,—
The other would break my heart.'

"All through that eve I watched her,
Holding her hand in mine,
Praying the Lord, and weeping
Till my lips were salt as brine.

I asked her once if she hungered,
And as she answered 'No,'
The moon shone in at the window
Set in a wreath of snow.

"Then the room was bathed in glory,
And I saw in my darling's eyes
The far-away look of wonder
That comes when the spirit flies;
And her lips were parched and parted,
And her reason came and went,
For she raved of our home in Devon,
Where our happiest years were spent.

"And the accents, long forgotten,
Came back to the tongue once more,
For she talked like the country lassie
I woo'd by the Devon shore.
Then she rose to her feet and trembled,
And fell on the rags and moaned,
And, 'Give me a crust—I'm famished—
For the love of God!' she groaned.

"I rushed from the room like a madman,
And flew to the workhouse gate,
Crying, 'Food for a dying woman!'
And the answer came, 'Too late.'

They drove me away with curses;
Then I fought with a dog in the street,
And tore from the mongrel's clutches
A crust he was trying to eat.

"Back, through the filthy by-lanes!
Back, through the trampled slush!
Up to the crazy garret,
Wrapped in an awful hush.
My heart sank down at the threshold,
And I paused with a sudden thrill,
For there in the silv'ry moonlight
My Nance lay, cold and still.

"Up to the blackened ceiling
The sunken eyes were cast—
I knew on those lips all bloodless
My name had been the last;
She'd called for her absent husband—
O God! had I but known!—
Had called in vain, and in anguish
Had died in that den—*alone*.

"Yes, there, in a land of plenty,
Lay a loving woman dead,
Cruelly starved and murdered
For a loaf of the parish bread.

At yonder gate, last Christmas,
I craved for a human life.
You, who would feast us paupers,
What of my murdered wife!

* * * *

"There, get ye gone to your dinners;
Don't mind me in the least;
Think of the happy paupers
Eating your Christmas feast;
And when you recount their blessings
In your smug parochial way,
Say what you did for *me*, too,
Only last Christmas Day."

THE LEVEL CROSSING.

THE eight o'clock up 's just gone, sir—the London express, you mean?
There ain't not another as stops here, not till the nine-fifteen.
Got any luggage a-comin'?—Oh, only been here for the day.
Yes, it 's a quietish village; never was over-gay.
We're glad of a stranger sometimes, and a bit of the Lunnon news;
It 's lonely up here at the station, and easy to get the blues,
For I 'm on till the early morning; and many and many a night
There 's never a human being as comes to bless my sight.

For the last of the trains as stops here is the parly at 10 P.M.,
And then I'm alone with my thoughts like, and I ain't always fond o' them.
Out yonder's a level crossing, and it's part o' my work, you know,
To watch here at night for the waggons a-travellin' to and fro.
Been any accidents? Bless you! we're a boon to the local Press;
The Company has me stop here just to try for to make 'em less.
Why, only last year a farmer—but haven't you heard the tale
How old Farmer Burton o' Birley was killed by the Limited Mail?

I thought as you must ha' heard it, for it made a regular fuss,
And they held an inquiry on it, and they laid the blame on us.
We ought to ha' seen and ha' warned him, so the chaps on the paper said;
But we none of us knew as he'd got there, not till we see him dead.
They brought it in accidental, the jury as tried the case;
But it was no accident neither, though it's rather a likely place.

Come and sit down in my shanty, you've nearly an hour to wait,
If you care for the rest I can tell you the story of Burton's fate.

Never mind how I know it—there's plenty o' folks beside
As knows about Master Burton, and why he came here and died;
For the women ha' talked it over, and whenever that comes about,
Wherever there's secrets hidden, the women 'll hunt 'em out.
They wagged their heads when he married poor penniless Mercy Leigh
Right on the top of her hearin' as her lover was drowned at sea.
Lord, how the women chattered—scandalous things they said!
Hintin' she wanted a husband to hide her sin with the dead!

This Mercy Leigh was the daughter of decentish honest folks,
And Burton had made her an offer, but she treated his words as jokes,
For Mercy was barely twenty, and Burton was sixty-two;
He'd made a bit at the farmin', and was counted as well to do;

He made it a joke himself like, his love for "the pretty child,"
And if anyone chaffed him about it, that's what he said, and smiled;
But under his broad thick waistcoat, right in his kind old heart,
I know as her nonsense pained him, though he took it in right good part.

It was pretty well known in the village that Mercy had set her cap
At the son of old Barnes, the builder, a dare-devil sailor chap;
And when he was off his cruises, and home for a week or so,
You'd meet him and Mercy together wherever you'd chance to go.
And the last time they parted he told her—that's what the gossips say—
That he reckoned, with luck and weather, he'd be but a month away,
And when he came back he'd wed her—he pledged her his solemn word;—
He'd perished at sea with his vessel—that was the next we heard.

Now, the very next day this Mercy was seen, with a long white face,
A-makin' for Chumleigh Meadows—that was old Burton's place—

And one of his people told me as she stayed there
half the day,
And they heard her a-cryin' and sobbin', and
moanin' her heart away.
But when they came out the farmer had gotten her
hand gripped tight,
And he kissed her, and said, "God bless you! I'll
speak to your folks to-night."
It was known on the morrow through Birley that
Mercy had promised to wed
The farmer of Chumleigh Meadows—but we noticed
her eyes were red.

'Twas plain as her heart was buried away in the
distant sea,
For I saw her the weddin' mornin', and her looks
had a tale for me.
But she went through the service bravely, and the
farmer's big brown face
Was bright with his love for Mercy, though he
stood in a dead man's place.
I think they was happy at first, too, for he wor-
shipped the ground she trod,
And went here and there like a sheep-dog, obeyin'
her every nod.
Yet he'd given his name and honour to a woman
who'd told him—well,
What seldom to one who'd wed her a woman has
dared to tell.

They were married six months and over, when, all
of a sudden, flew
News through the streets of Birley, as nobody
thought was true,—
That Barnes had escaped the shipwreck, and was
back from a lengthened trip;
He'd been rescued and carried to Melbourne aboard
of a sailin' ship.
She heard it first at the station—I shall never
forget her cry.
We carried her into this room here—I thought she
was like to die;
But she got all right in a minit, and, takin' her
husband's arm,
She walked like a tipsy woman back thro' the fields
to the farm.

In less than a month from that, sir, old Burton lay
here dead;
Here, at this level crossing—"Accident," so they
said.
But I know, for the woman told me who'd seen her
before the 'quest,
That for many a night he'd murmur, and talk in his
troubled rest;
And he'd wake in the night, and tell her, if it
chanced that he should die,
That the hand of God would have freed her for a
higher and holier tie.

And the eve as it happened he kissed her, with tears in his eyes, and said,
"Mercy, my darling! remember the *reason* that we were wed."

When he left her that night he told her he'd a lawyer to see in town.
He was crossing there for the platform when the engine struck him down.
That's how the jury got it, but *I* know a thing or two;
And I say that night when he kissed her, he knew what he meant to do;
For his will was made, and it told her to marry the sailor chap
If it pleased the Almighty to take him—accident too, mayhap?
She went away from the village, and the farm and the house were sold,
And she'd married young Barnes ere her mourning was barely a fortnight old.

A cold-blooded thing to do, sir?—Not a bit of it. She was right;
For she knew what was wearing his heart out when he went to his death that night.
He laid down his life that a father, cast up from the jaws of the sea,
Might hallow before God's altar the mother of one to be.

It was just a month to the day, sir, since Burton
was found here dead,
That the baby was born to Mercy.—Why, bless us!
the lights are red!
I must run to the box and change 'em. What does
that signal mean?
Why, that I must be saying good-night, sir, for here
is the nine-fifteen.

IN A CELLAR IN SOHO.

NOT a word! not a word, Marguerite!
It 's the step of the priest on the stairs.
Hark! he comes with his soft-falling feet,
Just to trap me, the wretch, unawares.
Put your hand on my mouth if I speak,
If I breathe but a word of the past;
I can tell the old fox by his creak;
Stand your back to the door—make it fast!

'Tis not he! Now I breathe! Give me air,
For I choke in this horrible stench;
Let the hunted beast die in his lair
Like a beast that is human, and French.
Fling the door on its hinges, I say,
And keep back the walls, lest they crush
And encompass and mangle their prey,
For the fever consumes me—Hark! hush!

All my brain is aflame, and it reels,
And runs back to that terrible time,
And I know not whose figure 'tis kneels,
Or whose lips breathe the words of my clime.
Is it thou, O my love! that I left
Dead and cold on the blood-sodden graves?
Or art priest, of all honour bereft,
Come to spy on the outcast who raves?

What was that? 'Twas the roll of the drum.
Up and out, for our lives, Marguerite!
Seize the musket hung yonder, and come;
For the troops of Versailles line the street.
See! our comrades are rushing this way,
And the city is all in a blaze;
We must fight for our lives, love, to-day,
In the kingdom of death—Pere la Chaise.

Here, my own, 'mid the tombs of the dead,
Let us fight for the children of France;
In the wind wave our banners of red,
In the May sun our drawn sabres glance.
Now, O Liberty, goddess of men!
We are doomed, but we kneel at thy shrine.
We are one to the foul traitors' ten,
Let our blood lave thine altars divine.

Kiss me here, 'mid the graves, Marguerite;
Grip your sabre, and crouch by this tomb.
Cut them down as they pass at your feet—
Crying, "Traitors, you come to your doom!"
Do you see, love, the legends they bear?—
These headstones that shelter us now—
And the yellow wreaths, too, "*A nos freres,*"
For our brothers, remember our vow!

For a tyrant our land was betrayed,
For a coward our heroes were slain,
Through our life-blood would Bonaparte wade
To the height of his glory again.
Though his throne has been hurled in the dust,
He has covered our banners with shame,
And our France is a prey to the lust
Of the fiends who dishonour and maim.

And the troops of Versailles, what are they?
Tools of knaves who but plot his return.
Men of Paris, they're vipers to slay,
Send their souls into Hades to burn!
Wipe his stain from our honour, and rise
From this carnage ennobled and free.
God of justice, we cry to the skies,—
When have people been tortured as we?

Marguerite, are you there with your sword?
Pretty wench! Why, it's red to the hilt!
Oh, they fight like she-devils, this horde
Of fair women—young—slenderly built.
'Tis thy glory, O France, when our girls
And our women for thee give their lives,
When a weak arm the keen sabre whirls,
And aims straight at our Fatherland's gyves.

Now the balls come like hail on the stones,
We are pent in and caught by the foe;
Do you hear me, sweetheart? How she moans!
Creep away through the tombs—let us go!
Marguerite! Marguerite! Do you hear?
Sweet, how bloody your hands are, and lips!
You are wounded, my brave Marguerite!
Curse the fiends! It's her life-blood that drips!

You are dead, Marguerite, for our France,
And your name shall be writ on her scroll;
When they find your poor body, perchance
They will maul you, and dig you a hole.
I must fly—I have fought—we have lost.
Vive la Commune! but still *sauve qui peut.*
Henceforth I'm a waif, tempest-tost,
But I fly, for Thiers' butchers pursue.

Where's our crown—that poor girl's and my own?
Where the laurels we won in the fight?
She is dead—I'm an outcast—alone,
Yet we fought for the people and right.
Now the land that I loved claims my life.
Were I known, even here in the street,
Men would shun me; and as to my wife,
By what name would they call Marguerite?

* * * *

Curse you, man—you 're the priest after all!
Lo, the mist clears away from my eyes,
And if any strange words I let fall
In my ravings just now, they were lies.
But I'm ill, and I'm hungry—and, priest,
In this den I go mad, and at times,
When I rave, snarl, and snap like a beast,
You might fancy me tortured by crimes.

I 'm a teacher of languages, please,
And the fever has stricken me down;
All my papers are right—look at these,
There 's my name and my age—How you frown!
Do you think I 'm a —— Curse you, you know!
You'll betray me! Bah! what need I care?
Paris butchers can't kill in Soho.
Fling that door open wide! Give me air!

I'm a Communist, priest, at death's door,
 Far away from the France that I love.
Just one boon, ere I die, I implore,—
 As you hope for God's mercy above:
When my soul clasps my own Marguerite,
 And my body man lays to its rest,
Put her name on the stone at my feet
 And a clod of French earth on my breast.

SAL GROGAN'S FACE.

THERE on the right's Sal Grogan, leaning against the bar;
Wait till she turns her head round—now you can see the scar.
Isn't it something loathsome, that horribly weird grimace?—
The burns that have blurred her features give her a demon's face.
She's worse than the wandering leper, for whenever she goes about
Folks shudder, and ask in anger, "Who lets such monsters out?"
And yet if they knew her story, and how those wounds were got,
I fancy the hardest-hearted would pity her awful lot.

You wouldn't believe Sal Grogan, that poor, distorted wretch,
Was ever a fine young woman, and reckoned a decent catch,
Shapely and plump and pretty,—and many a good old pal,
Who lived in the court that she did, fell out for the love of Sal,—
Fell out and had fearful quarrels; and many and many a fight
There's been in this very gin-shop, for the hag you see to-night.
But Sally, she turned her nose up, and flouted the lot with pride.
Drink up your liquor, she hears us! I'll tell you the rest outside.

I couldn't have stood it much longer—that awful face of hers,
Those horrible wounds and wrinkles, that ghastly mass of blurs!
It's a sickening sight to look at—did you see how the features run?—
There, let me get on with my story,—Sal flouted 'em ev'ry one:
Then all of a sudden she married a fellow called Handsome Jack—
Went and got married one Sunday behind her father's back.

A decent chap was her father, as folks in alleys go,
And Sal had a very good reason for wishing him not to know.

Grogan had got the credit of being a bit too flash,
For nobody knew exactly how he got hold of cash;
He was always in bed in the day-time, and seldom went out till night,
And folks in the alley whispered, he *had* to keep out of sight.
But Sal she worshipped the fellow, never a doubt of that,
And if anyone spoke against him, she answered 'em plain and pat.
For a couple of years, or over, affairs went smooth and well,
Then suddenly down the alley gossips had tales to tell.

One had heard Grogan swearing, and had caught the sound of blows
(The walls were of lath-and-plaster, and the houses stood in rows);
Another had seen Sal crying, and noticed a bruise on her cheek,

And then the women remembered she'd stayed
indoors for a week.
But at last the whole court knew it, for the sounds
of the strife grew high,
And Sally ran out all bloody, with a big cut over
her eye;
Jack at her heels came swearing, and straight at
her throat he flew,
And beating her down he kicked her, splitting her
cheek in two.

Then some of the women hissed him, but he gave
her another kick
Right in the breast, and this time—— Faugh! but
it makes one sick
To tell of that deed inhuman—it's common enough,
they say,
And down in these courts it happens pretty well
every day.
Poor Sal was just like a dead thing, but they let
Jack slink away,
And when he was safe, policemen were beckoned
to where she lay.
They bundled her on to a stretcher, and carried her
off to Guy's;
She was out in about a fortnight, with the loss of
one of her eyes.

She yearned for her home and husband—for through all the weary time
He'd never been near to see her; she fancied he feared his crime.
She had sent him a gentle message, saying that she forgave;
She worshipped the man, remember; she was only his humble slave.
She came to her home, and entered, hoping to find him there;—
And she found him there, with another—a woman young and fair.
She knew the girl in a moment, 'twas a white-faced, simpering jade
She'd seen before with her husband when the seeds of strife were laid.

She looked in his eyes a second, as she stood at the open door,
Then called on her God to witness he should see her face no more.
One glance of scorn and of loathing on the shameless pair she hurled,
Then gasping for breath she staggered out on the pitiless world.

* * * *

Months slipped away, and Sal Grogan no more in the court was met
Till one night she was seen near her father's, talking to Hagan's Bet.
Her figure was shrunk and wasted, and her face had grown so thin
That the scum of the alley saw it, and hushed their infernal din.

But right on the sudden silence rang a woman's piercing cry,
As flames from the crowded houses shot roaring up in the sky.
It was but the work of a moment, the flames rose higher and higher,
And spread till the crazy buildings were wrapped in a sheet of fire.
The court was filled in an instant with the black and blinding smoke,
And the crowd surged down the entry—an easyish one to choke;
But high above all the uproar Sal heard a woman shout
That Jack was drunk in the building, and no one could get him out.

The white-faced wanton knew it—she'd left him there and fled;

"She'd tried to save him," she snivelled,—"he was tipsy, asleep on the bed,
She couldn't help it—she tried to—but her life was her life, you know;
Let them as jawed so save him; why, it was death to go!"
The light o' love spoke truly, the flames had spread and spread;
Who went up that burning staircase might reckon themselves as dead.
Ha! what is that?—a woman?—by Heaven, the fellow's wife!
She has leapt in the fiery furnace! Sal Grogan! back for your life!

Too late—she has gone for ever—up to an awful death.
Men strain their eyes in terror, and the great crowd holds its breath.
"The roof is giving and melting!" As they shout the lead falls fast
In beads of the brightest silver, hot from the fiery blast.
Back went the crowd in a moment—it saw that the end was near—
And then with a rush ran forward, raising a deafening cheer:

For down through the falling timbers, down through the smoke and flame,
Bearing her heavy burden, the brave Sal Grogan came.

And just as she reached the bottom she staggered, and moaned, and fell,
But they dragged her, scorched and senseless, out of that burning hell.
She had paid a price for her daring, for full in her face, poor lass!
The molten lead had fallen and left it a scalded mass.
They thought that she'd die, but she didn't, for she lived to be the sight—
The horribly blemished creature you saw in the bar to-night.
She's taken to drink, they tell me. The husband? Oh, they say
He muttered a drunken "Curse you!" and went off to his wench next day.

* * * *

Oh, who would shudder or sicken, if he knew of the deed of grace
Enshrined in the ghastly features of poor Sal Grogan's face!

IN THE SHIPKA PASS.

YES, it is over, the victory 's won,
The smoke is beginning to roll away;
Just for a little the fighting 's done,
Still is the field of the fearful fray.
Draped on the arm with the badge of red,
Over the fields the searchers go,
Seeking the wounded among the dead,
And waving their lanterns to and fro.

A fair-faced woman is with the band—
Holiest hers of a woman's works!
"Sister Louise of the Gentle Hand,"
So she is called by the wounded Turks;
And never such beautiful eyes, I ween,
Lighted a soldier's path to God,
And never a fairer dame was seen
Kneeling by death on the blood-stained sod.

English? Oh, yes! they can tell you that.
And wedded—she wears the emblem ring;
A widow they guess, when the soldiers chat—
That is the most your questions bring;
But the weight of an awful grief she bears
Hidden away in her heaving breast,
And ever the look on her face she wears
Of the soul that is weary and pines for rest.

But here in the Shipka Pass to-night,
Dropping behind in the surgeon's train,
She glides, like an angel of holy light,
Down through the rows of the gory slain—
Shutting the lids of the staring eyes,
Stretching the limbs for their last repose,
Catching the whispered word that lies
On the lips that the thrills of death unclose.

Here, 'mid the wreck of a thousand braves,
Shattered and shot in a hopeless cause,
White and wan in the moonlight waves,
O'er a heap of slain see the sister pause—
Pause for a moment, and reel away,
Smitten as if by a sabre stroke,
For there at her feet two wounded lay,
Their faces black with the battle smoke.

She has gazed on death in a hundred shapes,
And the horrible wounds of the modern strife,
But now from her lips a cry escapes
As she bends her ear for the sounds of life.
They live! they breathe—yet she turns to fly,
And her face is hot with a great white heat,
For there together these wounded lie,
Two loves betrayed, at her craven feet.

Husband and lover! O God above!
If mercy there be for the worst of sins,
Grant that her prayer to the throne of love
Some balm for her horrible anguish wins!
Husband and lover! and side by side,
With their life-blood flowing, a mingled stream.
What wonder the shivering woman cried—
"Wake me, O God! 'tis a ghastly dream!

"'Tis a dream—a dream of the long ago.
I am gay to-night in the giddy whirl;
And Raymond he follows me to and fro
With his ceaseless chiding of 'Foolish girl!'
He is jealous, this burly lord of mine,
Jealous of rattlepate handsome Guy;
I am sure we are careful to draw the line,
But I like to tease him—I know not why.

"'Tis a dream—a dream; I have left *his* home—
He struck me, wounded my woman's pride;
We are hiding in lodgings—abroad—in Rome,
And the tale of our flight is far and wide.
Guy hears from home; he has trusty friends,
Who give us the news of my husband's quest;
In a letter to-day one tidings sends,
My shame is safe in my husband's breast.

"I hate him now! Had he sought the law,
The law would at least have set me free.
What was it stayed his hand? *He saw*
That Guy might have given his name to me.
A fig for such love as his, I say,
It wasn't a thing to be named with Guy's;
For me *he* has flung the world away,
And I am the world in his noble eyes.

"'Tis a dream—a dream. Do I hear aright?
He has told my people 'twas his the blame;
And now he is going abroad to fight;
With tears in his eyes he shields my fame!
Raymond! my husband! O God, I was mad,
Ever to torture a heart so true!
He is my husband—O that he had
Never a cause my love to rue!

"I have parted for ever from Guy to-day;
Never again will I look on his face;
From the haunts of men I will wander away,
Hiding for ever my soul's disgrace.
The glorious East is ablaze with war;
In a mission of mercy may guilt atone—
I am Sister Louise, of the Ambulance Corps,
I am here with the dead to-night, alone.

"Spare me my reason, O Lord, awhile!
The blast of the night wind cools my brow.
A wanton and wicked, am I too vile
For Thy cleansing fires to purge me now?
'Tis a dream—a dream—blood has turned my brain;
I will not look at these things below;
There are the lights of the surgeon's train—
Oh, but they hear me not—on they go!

"How cold comes the blast of the icy north!
It seizes my throat and stops my breath;
Or has Thy merciful word gone forth?
Are these the chills of the coming death?
Husband and lover, or dying or dead,
Room, if your brave souls be not loth,
Room for the woman to lay her head
Who ruined your lives, and loved you both.

"Husband and lover—oh, speak one word
Here in the gloom of the Eastern night!
They answer me not, they have not heard,
Or, hearing, they have not heard aright.
How came you lying here side by side,
Here in the ranks of the slaughtered Turks?
Speak to your mistress—tell your bride,
While still in my brain some reason lurks.

"Both of them dead! I am glad 'tis so,
For, taking a hand of each in mine,
I can kiss them both now they'll neither know,
And whisper their names to the King divine.
Husband and lover, here hand in hand
Our bodies will lie in the blood-stained grass,
And at dawn to-morrow the searching band
Will give us one grave in the Shipka Pass."

BILLY'S ROSE.

BILLY'S dead, and gone to glory—so is Billy's sister Nell:
There's a tale I know about them were I poet I would tell;
Soft it comes, with perfume laden, like a breath of country air
Wafted down the filthy alley, bringing fragrant odours there.

In that vile and filthy alley, long ago one winter's day,
Dying quick of want and fever, hapless, patient Billy lay,
While beside him sat his sister, in the garret's dismal gloom,
Cheering with her gentle presence Billy's pathway to the tomb.

Many a tale of elf and fairy did she tell the dying child,
Till his eyes lost half their anguish, and his worn, wan features smiled:
Tales herself had heard hap-hazard, caught amid the Babel roar,
Lisped about by tiny gossips playing round their mothers' door.

Then she felt his wasted fingers tighten feebly as she told
How beyond this dismal alley lay a land of shining gold,
Where, when all the pain was over—where, when all the tears were shed—
He would be a white-frocked angel, with a gold thing on his head.

Then she told some garbled story of a kind-eyed Saviour's love,
How He'd built for little children great big play-grounds up above,
Where they sang and played at hop-scotch and at horses all the day,
And where beadles and policemen never frightened them away.

This was Nell's idea of Heaven—just a bit of what she'd heard,
With a little bit invented, and a little bit inferred.
But her brother lay and listened, and he seemed to understand,
For he closed his eyes and murmured he could see the Promised Land.

"Yes," he whispered, "I can see it—I can see it, sister Nell;
Oh, the children look so happy, and they're all so strong and well;
I can see them there with Jesus—He is playing with them, too!
Let us run away and join them, if there's room for me and you."

She was eight, this little maiden, and her life had all been spent
In the garret and the alley, where they starved to pay the rent;
Where a drunken father's curses and a drunken mother's blows
Drove her forth into the gutter from the day's dawn to its close.

But she knew enough, this outcast, just to tell the sinking boy,
"You must die before you're able all these blessings to enjoy.
You must die," she whispered, "Billy, and I am not even ill;
But I'll come to you, dear brother,—yes, I promise that I will.

"You are dying, little brother,—you are dying, oh, so fast;
I heard father say to mother that he knew you couldn't last.
They will put you in a coffin, then you'll wake and be up there,
While I'm left alone to suffer in this garret bleak and bare."

"Yes, I know it," answered Billy. "Ah, but, sister, I don't mind,
Gentle Jesus will not beat me; He's not cruel or unkind.
But I can't help thinking, Nelly, I should like to take away
Something, sister, that you gave me, I might look at every day.

"In the summer you remember how the mission took us out
To a great green lovely meadow, where we played and ran about,
And the van that took us halted by a sweet bright patch of land,
Where the fine red blossoms grew, dear, half as big as mother's hand.

"Nell, I asked the good kind teacher what they called such flowers as those,
And he told me, I remember, that the pretty name was rose.
I have never seen them since, dear—how I wish that I had one!
Just to keep and think of you, Nell, when I'm up beyond the sun."

Not a word said little Nelly; but at night, when Billy slept,
On she flung her scanty garments and then down the stairs she crept.
Through the silent streets of London she ran nimbly as a fawn,
Running on and running ever till the night had changed to dawn.

When the foggy sun had risen, and the mist had
cleared away,
All around her, wrapped in snowdrift, there the
open country lay.
She was tired, her limbs were frozen, and the roads
had cut her feet,
But there came no flowery gardens her poor tearful
eyes to greet.

She had traced the road by asking—she had learnt
the way to go ;
She had found the famous meadow—it was wrapped
in cruel snow ;
Not a buttercup or daisy, not a single verdant
blade
Showed its head above its prison. Then she knelt
her down and prayed.

With her eyes upcast to heaven, down she sank
upon the ground,
And she prayed to God to tell her where the roses
might be found.
Then the cold blast numbed her senses, and her
sight grew strangely dim ;
And a sudden, awful tremor seemed to seize her
every limb.

"Oh, a rose!" she moaned, "good Jesus—just a rose to take to Bill!"
And as she prayed a chariot came thundering down the hill;
And a lady sat there, toying with a red rose, rare and sweet;
As she passed she flung it from her, and it fell at Nelly's feet.

Just a word her lord had spoken caused her ladyship to fret,
And the rose had been his present, so she flung it in a pet;
But the poor, half-blinded Nelly thought it fallen from the skies,
And she murmured, "Thank you, Jesus!" as she clasped the dainty prize.

* * * *

Lo that night from out the alley did a child's soul pass away,
From dirt and sin and misery to where God's children play.
Lo that night a wild, fierce snowstorm burst in fury o'er the land,
And at morn they found Nell frozen, with the red rose in her hand.

Billy's dead, and gone to glory—so is Billy's sister
Nell;
Am I bold to say this happened in the land where
angels dwell:—
That the children met in heaven, after all their
earthly woes,
And that Nelly kissed her brother, and said, "Billy,
here's your rose"?



ORINSKA.

FROM northern lands the singer came,
I bade him strike his harp and try
The story that I knew by name,
Yet none may sing lest traitors spy—
For in that minstrel's native clime
The words are treason black as night.
Thus ran his song, in rugged rhyme,
With simple words and moral trite.

"I may not mention time or place,
I may not breathe my hero's name,
Lest one of his proud, haughty race
Should blush to find the story fame.
I would not sting the living cheek
To honour now the noble dead.
Let God above His vengeance wreak
If aught shall bow the guilty head.

"O'er mighty hordes his father reigned,
And he stood nearest to the throne,
And all his people's love he gained;
Throughout the land his worth was known.
His speech was soft, and through his eyes
There shone a light serene and clear,
Good Nature's beacon, to apprise
The tempest-tost 'There's safety here.'

"Before the world he wore his rank
With majesty and regal mien;
But far from men, he lowly sank,
And hid his head his hands between,
And cried, 'Oh, peasant in your cot!
Oh, weary hands that dig and toil,
I envy you your glorious lot,
Rough children of the grateful soil.'

"Harsh fetters were his princely chains,
They caged the noble heart that beat
To share his people's joys and pains
And walk the world with careless feet;
To fling the mask of state aside,
And be God's noble work—*a man!*
Hemmed in and barred by pomp and pride,
He pined the stream of fate to span.

"For in his visions came two stars,
That shone and made his way seem fair;
They gleamed between his prison bars,
And bade him seek the outer air.
And those twin lights were maiden eyes,
Two sparks that set his soul astir.
A crown was his—a certain prize;
But he would give the world for her!

"For her, a peasant, lowly born,
A fair-faced, laughing, saucy girl,
Whom high-bred youth should shun or scorn—
The daughter of an unfreed churl.
'Orinska,' in his dreams he moaned,
'I 'd rather share a hut with thee
Than reign a despot high enthroned!
What cruel fate made prince of me?'

"And so at last there came a day
When, flinging rank and name aside,
He sought the village far away,
And wooed and won a peasant bride.
Nor dreamed she of his high estate,
But thought it equal with her own,
And took him for her lawful mate
When faith had ripened—love had grown.

"Missed from his father's court by few,
He travelled, so the gossip ran;
Yet where he dwelt the monarch knew,
And sent his spies the place to scan.
They brought him word; their crafty hands
The skein untangled and unwound,
And showed the heir to mighty lands
In humble wedlock tied and bound.

"The sire's fierce eyebrows met in rage,
And o'er his face black shadows passed;
A solemn oath he did engage
That day the doves should coo their last.
His kingly blood ran chill to think
The issue of his loins should e'er
Look downward to the mud, and link
With beings bred and nurtured there.

"That eve a secret band set out
To seize and bring the recreant son—
The vile, debased, unprincely lout—
Who outrage on his rank had done.
They tore him, in the dead of night,
From pale Orinska's wild embrace;
And ere the dawning day was light
The sire and son stood face to face.

" 'What devil, boy,' the monarch cried,
'Hath urged thee to this deed of shame?
To herd with peasants—seek a bride
From vermin all too foul to name?
'Tis treason, knave, against my throne;
Dishonour to your princely grade;
But bitterly shall both atone—
The shameless son, the wanton jade!'

" 'Sire,' quoth the son, and bowed his head,
'I am a peasant, and no prince;
My brother is your heir instead;
I 've shed the rank, nor craved it since.
A peasant, with a peasant wife,
I 'll pass my days in healthy toil,
Rear hardy children to the life
And claim my guerdon from the soil.'

" Poor fool, to think such joys can be!—
He knew not how Orinska lay
Stabbed to the heart—her murderers free,
Since but the monarch's tools were they
He knew at last, yet shed no tear,
But cried, 'Oh, curse of kingly sway!
E'en that he holds in life most dear
A prince's love can only slay!

"'My kiss was but the fierce, hot blast,
That scorched the rose and left it dead;
O sin, that e'er mine eyes were cast
To where it blossomed pure and red!
Had I but wooed my love in sport,
Or damned her soul to please a whim,
I had not sinned against his court
Or put this bloody deed on him.

"'Farewell, O world! I cannot purge
The princely poison in my veins,
Yet from the grave we all emerge
To where one level rank remains.
There prince and peasant shall be one,
And there my dearest love doth wait.'
That night a daring deed was done,
And Cæsar wept his first-born's fate."

* * * *

The singer ceased. I will not say
If I believe his story true;
And yet, I think, perchance they may
Who search the page of hist'ry through.
There have been kings whose lives were sad,
Who, all unwilling, played the part;
Since, like Orinska's lord, they had,
O fatal gift—a human heart!



DURING HER MAJESTY'S PLEASURE.

WHO says I'm mad? The coward knaves
Who thought to save my woman's neck?
The murdered lie within their graves,
But sane I wrought the bloody wreck.
Hath not a mother right to shield
Her children from the yawning hell?
In mercy God the truth revealed,
And claimed the lives I loved too well.

Whence come you, man, to question me?
If that you be by Justice sent
To say that now my end shall be,
Because my judges' hearts relent,
I'll prove to you that I am sane;
Since life is torture, let me die;
For outraged laws I would be slain;
My children call me from on high.

He kissed my lips, and called me fair,
 His fierce false eyes shone into mine;
The man-fiend lured me to his lair,
 And I was drunk with love as wine.
Our hands were bound in Holy Church,
 We had God's altar and a priest:
God gave a man my soul to smirch,
 Man gave my body to a beast.

You think a woman mad who speaks
 A language foul on woman's lips,
Where man, her master, simply seeks
 For words of love in honeyed drips.
What godhead do you claim, O men,
 To make our being serve your joys,
In prisoned space our lives to pen?
 Are women but your sawdust toys?

I ask your pardon, stranger knight,
 Who sought the captive in her gaol;
Believe you have not heard aright,
 My lips shall frame a smoother tale:
I yield to fate—I rave no more—
 I was the fool all women are;
No higher did my spirit soar
 Than just to make a man its star.

A man! Oh, I could tear this face
Until the hot blood gushed and welled,
My life's damnation was its grace
Which first his eyes to mine impelled.
Must I be mad because I shriek
And moan beneath the lash of fate?
Or cry the heavens on him to wreak
The vengeance of my deathless hate?

For, look! these hands that wear his ring
Are red with blood that left his veins,
My dead babes' souls to stain and sting,
And work its evil in their brains.
When year by year he viler grew,
And his foul nature came to light,
I prayed God take them ere I knew
Their bud and blossom hid the blight.

He robbed me. Oh, the vilest thief
Who robs a child that trips to school
Might hail my craven lord as chief,
For I was but a baby fool—
A woman weak—a trusting wife;
He stole my youth and health and faith,
Shut out the light from all my life,
And left me but love's moaning wraith.

My husband! Faugh! my lips are flame,
And burn and blacken as they link
A word so holy with the shame
Of him who brought me to the brink,—
Who took me, heart and soul and flesh,
To lead me to the gulf and cry,
"To get thee from my lawful mesh
There only doth the roadway lie."

A parting blow—a parting oath—
A devil's face—a fierce farewell;
He left the children—left them both—
To share on earth their mother's hell;
To toil and starve—the shameless hound!—
To die for any help but mine;
For we were penniless, I found,
And then I prayed for help divine.

And in the night God came to me,
And showed me, in a ghastly dream,
How, if they lived, my boys would be
Attainted from the parent stream;
That through their veins his poison ran,
And in their souls his nature slept.
I said, "The seed shall not be man,"
Yet all that day I only wept.

But when the night was come they lay
In gentle slumber side by side,
And then God nerved my hand to stay
The rushing of life's crimson tide.
So swift I their salvation wrought,
The smile of sleep still kept its place—
Only a holier look death brought
To light each placid baby face.

So they were saved from Satan's grasp,
And God has got them safe and whole,
No woman now they e'er can clasp
With demon hands and sear her soul.
And that I did this noble deed,
And slew the father in the sons,
My earthly judges take no heed,
But each who hears me shrinks and shuns.

They hold me here to drive me mad,
To wreak *his* vengeance. Ay, I know—
Hark to the wailing low and sad;
My children call me—let me go!
O man, in mercy burst these chains,
Give me my death as act of love:
Life mocks a mother's deathless pains
Whose babies wait with God above.

TWO WOMEN.

TO-NIGHT is a midnight meeting, and the
Earl is in the chair;
There's food and a little sermon for all
who enter there,
For all of our erring sisters who, finding their trade
is slack,
Have time to sit down and listen to the holy men
in black.

To-night is a midnight meeting, and in from the
filthy street
They are bringing the wretched wantons who sin
for a crust to eat;
There's cake to be had, and coffee, as well as the
brimstone tracts
That paint in such flaming colours the end of their
evil acts.

There's cake to be had, and coffee, and a seat, and warmth and light,
And shelter, for just a little, from the pitiless lash of night;
And as for the scolding sermon—though it comes through the preacher's nose—
There 's a bit of it, now and then, too, that tells on the ghastly rows.

There are streaks on the ruddled faces when a long-lost chord is struck;
For women are quick to whimper when they 're ill and are out of luck.
Some picture of early childhood—of the innocent long ago,
Is raised by an artful preacher, and the tears begin to flow.

It is only a trick of the platform, a trick that they always try,
For they reckon it half the battle if the women are made to cry;
They soften them down and smooth them, and then when they 're ripe for seed,
They paint them an awful picture of the end of the life they lead.

To-night is a midnight meeting, and out of the rain and dirt
There creeps in a sinful woman—drenched is her draggled skirt,
Drenched are the gaudy feathers that droop in her shapeless hat,
And her hair hangs over her shoulders in a wet, untidy mat.

She hears of the fiery furnace that waits for the wicked dead;
Of the torture in store for the outcast who sins for her daily bread;
She hears that a God of mercy has built, on a sunlit shore,
A haven of rest eternal for those who shall sin no more.

Anon by the silent waters she kneels, with her eyes upcast,
And whispers her Heavenly Father, "O God, I have sinned my last.
Here, in this cruel city, to live I must sin the sin;
Save me from that, O Father!—pity, and take me in."

A plunge in the muddy river, a cry on the chill night air,
And the waters upon their bosom a pilgrim sister bear;
She has laved the stain of the city from her soul in the river slime,
She has sought for the promised haven through the door of a deadly crime.

* * * *

To-night is a midnight meeting—a ball in a Western square—
And rank and fashion and beauty, and a Prince of the blood are there;
In the light of a thousand tapers the jewelled bosoms gleam,
And the cheeks of the men are flushing, and the eyes of the women beam.

Round in the sensuous galop the high-born maids are swung,
Clasped in the arms of *roues* whose vice is on ev'ry tongue;
And the stately Norman mothers look on the scene with pride
If the *roue* is only wealthy and in search of a youthful bride.

But fair above all the women is the beautiful
Countess May,
And wealthy and great and titled yield to her
queenly sway;
Her they delight to honour, her they are proud
to know,
For wherever the Countess visits, a Prince of the
blood will go.

The story is common gossip; there isn't a noble
dame
That bows to the reigning beauty but knows of
her evil fame.
She is married—had sons and daughters when she
humoured a Prince's whim;
But her husband is proud of her conquest—the
Prince is a friend to *him*.

The bishop who christens her babies, the coachman
who drives her pair,
The maid who carries her letters, the footman
behind her chair,
The Marquis, her white-haired father, her brothers,
so gossips say—
All know of the guilty passion of the Prince and
the Countess May.

The doors of the Court are open, and the great
Lord Chamberlain bows,
Though he knows that the titled wanton has broken
her marriage vows;
And all of the courtiers flatter, and strive for a
friendly glance—
On her whom the Prince delights in who dares to
look askance?

She is crowned with the world's fresh roses; no
tongue has a word of blame;
But the woman who falls from hunger is a thing too
foul to name.
She is blessed who barters her honour just for a
prince's smile;
The vice of the Court is *charming,* and the vice of
the alley *vile.*

So, world, shall it be for ever—this hunting the
street girl down,
While you honour the titled Phryne, and hold her
in high renown;
But when, at the great uprising, they meet for the
Judgment Day,
I 'd rather be that drowned harlot than the beautiful
Countess May.

THE LAST LETTER.

JACK, old pal, is it you over there?
I 've been dozin', old fellow, I think;
How long have ye been in that chair?
Stay ye here, lad, and hand us a drink.
That 's the stuff in the jug on the tray.
Am I better? No, Jack, that I ain't,
Nor I never shall be, so they say.
Where 's the drink? give it here, lad—I 'm faint!

Dang it all, Jack, it 's hard when it comes,
This 'ere Death, as we laughs at and jeers;
And I don't mind confessin', 'twixt chums,
As this last touch has give me the skeers.
I 'm a-dying, I tell ye—don't speak!
Don't pertend as ye thinks as I 'm not.
I know what 's a-keepin' me weak,
And I know it 's the fever I 've got.

I heerd 'em, old chap, what they sed
When they come in the shanty jes' now;
I turned to the wall, hid my 'ed,
And pretended to snore like a sow.
So they thought I was sleepin', ye know,
And they sed as I 'd copped it o' Jim;—
Well, it come like a bit of a blow,
For I watched by the deathbed o' him.

Now I reckons my race is nigh run,
And I ain't but a few days to live.
Well, as parson says, "*Thy* will be done!"
And I adds that there bit 'bout "Forgive."
I 'm a bad 'un, old chap, certain sure,
Like the rest of the coves here I 've bin,
For the atmosphere ain't over pure—
At the diggin's it 's easy to sin.

I ain't not a coward to whine,
Not 'cos I 'm like for to die,
But I wants that there "mercy Divine"
As they talks of, old chap—you know why.
For it 's hard, Jack, to be as I be,
Lyin' here at the end o' my life,
While them thousands o' miles o' the sea
Is a-roarin' 'twixt husband and wife.

If the wicked man's portion is flame,
I suppose that 's the thing I deserve;
But I don't like to think o' that same,
For I 'm weak, and I ain't got the nerve.
Oh! it 's hard that 'twixt me and my love
After death the black waters will flow;
For she 'll go to them angels above,
While I 'm sent to the devil below.

Save me, Lord! Let me see her once more
For a minute—the time for a kiss;
Jest a second with her on that shore,
When she comes to her throne and her bliss.
She will ask you that blessin' as well;
She 's deservin' o' heaven, but still,
You might jest as soon put her in hell
As to not let her speak to her Bill.

Jack, I rave, and my head seems to swim,
Then I comes to my senses again.
Now, that 's jest how the fever took Jim;
Sit 'e here, lad, a bit while I 'm sane.
Be it wicked to think, as may be,
A woman like her—like my own—
Would be rather in torture with me
Than a-sittin' in heaven alone?

Jack, old pal, do ye know as I feels
I can see her out yonder to-day;
I can see the old room, and she kneels
And she prays for her Bill far away.
When the bairns see the tears on her cheek,
Then they know as she's thinkin' o' dad;
Here 's her letter as reached me last week,
Jest afore I was taken so bad.

I ain't answered that letter not yet,
I 'm too weak and too weary to write;
It 's the last one as ever I 'll get—
Put it there, lad, to gladden my sight.
Put it there, where my eyes, gettin' dim,
Will behold it right up to the end;
When I 'm dead say, "It 's buried wi' him,
And it lies on his heart like a friend."

I remember that day as we sailed,
You and me, for these wonderful fields,
Where the di'monds and gold never failed:
Lord! it 's fevers and agues they yields.
Work was scarce over there, times was slack;—
Over here there was fortunes to make;
In a couple of years we 'd go back,
And now—well, 'twas done for her sake.

'Twon't be long now, I guess, 'fore I go—
Jim was dead in a couple of days—
You go mad at the finish, I know,
And you struggles and shouts in a craze.
While I can, Jack, I 've something to say;
Savin' you here I ain't got a pal;
I must answer that letter to-day,
And I wants you to write to my gal.

On yon table 's the pen and the ink;
Now write just the words as I speak,—
" My dear Bess, I 'm not well, but I think
It 's the weather as makes me so weak;
Me and Jack is quite happy out here,
And we hope soon to hit on a spot
As 'll turn us some coin in, my dear—
And the weather 's been awfully hot.

" I can't send no money just yet,
But I 'll bring plenty back by-and-by—
And that 'ere won't be long—don't 'e fret."
Jack, I hope God 'll pardon the lie;
I don't want the last words I write
To be hintin' o' death, and be sad;
I want, when I 'm thinkin' to-night,
To know as she 'll read, and be glad.

"God bless you, my darlin'! keep heart;
Give the bairns a good cuddle for me;
Jack 's a-writin' this here 'cos he 's smart,
And the mail 's gettin' ready for sea.
I can't write myself, 'cos my hand
Isn't well what I hurt with the spade;
Jack and I has a scheme what we 've planned,
When we 're home and our fortins is made.

"I can pictur' the day when we meet;
I can fancy your head on my breast,
And your eyes look in mine—oh, so sweet!—
And our bairns is all snug in the nest."
Jack, old man, write it quick, for I 'm queer,
And there 's mists comin' over my sight;
"God bless you and keep you, my dear!
I 'm your own lovin' Bill—and good-night."

She 'll read it, the bairns on her knee,
When I 'm cold evermore in the grave;
And she 'll strain them fond eyes to the sea
For a bark as will ne'er skim the wave.
Oh, it 's hard to be dyin' like this,
When she reads—will she dream o' the scene?
Jack, just give me that letter to kiss;
She will touch where the kisses has been.

Jack, old man, will ye give us a prayer?
P'r'aps it may be as God 'ull forgive;
Let me meet my poor Bessie up there
When I 'm dead, as I can't while I live.
For it 's hard on the wench as my sins
Should divorce us in heaven as well.
I 've heard as it 's pray'r pardon wins:
Prop me up while I pray for a spell.

When I 'm dead, just you write her again,
Say I 'd faith when I wrote to her last;
That I couldn't send sorrow and pain,
Or a message her hopes for to blast.
Say I wasn't alone when I went,
That you had my hand tight in yer grip,
Say you caught my last breath as ye leant,
And that "Bess" was the word on my lip.

POLLY.

IT'S poems he 's readin', that boy there;
he reads by the hour and cries;
A silly young oaf to be fillin' his head
with a parcel o' lies.
What ha' poor folks to do with that humbug?—it 's
all very well for the rich
To go frettin' theirselves about wictims and fairies,
and corpses and sich;
Or to go off their nuts about ladies as dies for
young fellers as fights,
And them Byrons, and Manfreds, and Hamlets
what has ghostes to talk to o' nights.
He reads out aloud, and I hears him a-talkin' the
awfullest trash
About earls as goes mad in their castles, and
females what settles their hash.

Potry! I'd burn it, I would, sir—it's that what
makes young fellows drink,
And a-leave off a-partin' their hair straight and a-
washin' theirselves at the sink.
He must work for his livin', that boy must. Will
wisions put clo's on his limbs?
Will Byron or Tennerson feed him, or old Mr.
What's-his-name's hymns?
There ain't not no potry in green stuff—in 'taturs
and inguns and peas,
And a-workin' from dorn till it's midnight to earn
just yer beer, bread, and cheese.
Yes, I'm pretty well off, Mister, I am; but I've
worked like a black all my days,
And I means as my boy shall do likewise, to keep
him from wagabone ways.

There, he's off! the young warmint, he's needled;
whenever I talks about work
He puts on his cap and he hooks it; he's a notion
he'll go for a clerk.
The green-stuff ain't up to his 'ighness; he don't
like to serve at the stall;
He fancies hisself in a orfice, a-fillin' o' books with
his scrawl.
It's the School Board what gives 'em these notions,
a-stuffin' boys' heads full of pride,

And makes 'em look down on their fathers—these
School Boards I ne'er could abide.
When I was his age I was workin', a-wheelin' the
barrer for dad,
And a-fetchin' the stuff from the markets, when
hosses was not to be had.

Lame! What, ye noticed it, did yer? Well, yes,
he goes lame on his pins,
And that's just why I stomachs his tantrums and
forgives the young beggar his sins;
For he ain't not a bad boy at bottom—and he 'll
carry that limp to his grave—
He 'd a squeak for his life when that happened—
escaped by the narrowest shave.
That was eight years ago—how time passes! I was
only a-costerin' then,
Not a greengrocer like I be now, sir, with a shop
and a couple o' men.
It was all through yon mare in the stables, the mare
as ye saw in the yard.
As fat as Sir Roger, sir, warn't she? We don't
make her work very hard.
That was Polly, that mare was—our Polly—'Lor'
bless ye, it 's just like a tale;
Eight years ago she was done for, her strength was
beginning to fail.

She'd been run off her legs in the barrer, a-gallopin' mornin' and night,
And the winter was heavy and frosty, and settled poor Polly outright;
So my mates what had flyers they passed me, and left me behind on the road;
And often she'd tremble and stagger, and make quite a fuss at a load.
She'd worked like a good 'un, had Polly, and paid me agen and agen;
But I thought as the critter was done for, and sold her to one of the men.

I got a few poun' from a coper, who bought her and faked her a bit,
And sold her agen at a profit to a feller named Whitechapel Kit.
Such a brute!—but that's just by the way, sir. As soon as I'd scraped up the cash,
I bought a new hoss with the money,—I wanted to be a bit flash.
I bid for a beautiful stepper, as carried his 'ed in the air,
One as looked like the horty young hosses what noblemen drives in a pair,
I got him dirt cheap for a pony, and I reckon I felt a bit proud

When I put down the ready and took him and led him away through the crowd.

'Twas a Saturday night as I bought him, this fine, strappin', flea-bitten grey;
So on Sunday I drove him to Hendon, the missis and kid in the shay.
He went like the wind; such a pictur'; the coves as had chaffed me before,
Their hi's was a-startin' with envy; by the whole blessed bilin' we tore.
And I set there as proud as a peacock, a-holdin' the reins like a toff,
And a-puffin' a great big Maniller, as set my old gal on the cough.
And up by the Harp we met Polly, a-drorin' six coves in a cart,
And that Kit was a-beatin' 'is 'ardest; it give me a pain in my heart.

I passed the poor critter a-panting, and hearing Kit's curses and blows,
It made me feel mad with myself, like, and I hit my hoss over the nose.
I was flickin' the whip in my anger—not meanin' to hit 'im at all—
But the brute gave a leap and then bolted, dashed forward, and ran at a wall.

It was done in a moment, and over; I fainted, and when we was found
We was all of a heap there a-bleedin', and the grey was quite still on the ground.
His hind leg was broke; I was injured; the wheel had gone over my wife,
And the boy as you saw here a-readin'—well, the fall, sir, had lamed him for life.

But the worst of it all was the grey, sir—when a coster he loses a hoss,
It's precious nigh ruin, I reckon—there's few as gets over the loss.
For his savins is gone in a minit, his food and his clothes and his rent.
'Twas the hoss as my pals went to first, sir,—they knew what the accident meant;
And while we was sittin' there moaning, poor Polly comes toiling along,
With that Kit still a-thrashing her brutal, with a stick and a great leather thong;
And she turned her poor head so, I fancied, and I seed such a look in her eye,
I'll swear as she knew what had happened, for she give quite a queer little cry.

It was ruin that night in our kitching as sat in the chair by my side;

The boy was up stairs there a-groanin', the missis had like to 'a' died;
Thirty poun' had gone smash in a minit—we 'd borrowed a portion o' that—
Now I hadn't a hoss for my bus'ness, and I didn't know what to be at.
Then I thought about Polly, and sorrowed to think as I 'd let the mare go;
She 'd 'a' worked with a rest for a long time; she was sure, if she was a bit slow,
And just as I sat there a-thinkin'—a-cussin', and breakin' my heart,
There was something came bump on the doorstep, and there was a hoss and a cart.

It was Polly!—I see her a-standing, and thought as she 'd come from the skies,
And she rubbed her old nose on my coat-sleeve, and I stuck like a log with surprise;
Then she walked herself off to the stable, and give me to know, sir, outright
As she 'd thank me to take off the harness and make up her bed for the night.
And she 's been my right hand to this day, sir, and things 'as gone well with me, too,
And I 've turned up the street and the barrer, and now I 'm a man well to do.

Didn't Kit come to claim her? Why, no, sir—and
that 's just the best of the tale:
He was collared for something at Hendon, and
walked off that minit to gaol.

It seems he was nought but a bad 'un; he 'd been
cracking a crib, so they say,
And the peelers was put on his traces, and they
copped him at Hendon that day.
They copped him inside a-refreshing, and took him
away there and then,
And Polly she stood there a-waiting, but they 'd
bolted away had the men.
She waited, and, nobody coming, she just took it
into her head
To trot off in search of her supper and make for
her old master's shed.
So from that day to this one I 've kept her, and Kit
ain't been seen any more,
And I date all the blessins I 've had, sir, from the
night as she come to my door.

Past work is old Polly, God bless her! but while
I 've a roof and a brown
There 's a meal for the mare as has served me, and
a bed for my lass to lay down.

I felt when that grey chucked us over as Providence meant it, maybe,
As a smack for a-sellin' a critter as had given her best days to me.
Ah! here comes my Tommy a-limpin'—now, Tommy, don't pick up that book,
You'll never have nowt in your headpiece till poems has taken their hook.
What!—get along with you, Mister—I ain't told no poems to you,
That tale about Polly ain't potry—it can't be, ye see, *for it 's true!*

AN OLD FOOL.

(A FASHIONABLE CONVERSATION.)

"DEAR me!" cried the Duchess; "Ha, ha!" laughed the Earl,
While the Marchioness turned up her delicate nose
('Twas an aquiline feature not easy to curl),
And the rest of the guests gave a chorus of "Oh's!"

"So he's taken her back! What a fool!" cried the Duke;
"A man of his wealth, and position, and years.
Did he kiss her and thank her, or mildly rebuke?
What weapons were hers—were they tantrums or tears?"

"It 's a deuced queer story," drawled Egerton Grey,
"I heard it of Carholme last night, at the club.
It's a fortnight at least since the pair ran away,
And he 's taken her back, like a dutiful hub."

The Marchioness giggled, the Earl laughed aloud,
And the Duchess declared it was terrible taste.
Then hushing the taunts of the frivolous crowd,
To tell the whole story a comrade made haste.

For the hero is dear to his brother in arms,
By whose side he has fought, by whose side he has bled;
In the mouth of this soldier the story has charms,
And Malice sits silent and holds down its head.

"Come, listen, you people who scoff and who jeer
At a deed that an angel might claim as its own;
Let your laughter give way to a blush when you hear
Why Sir George gave this woman one chance to atone.

"When at Alma his colonel fell, shot through the breast,
This man took an oath as he knelt by his side.
'Guard my girl!' cried the colonel,—his hand Sir George prest,
And it 's five years ago since that girl was his bride.

"He worshipped, he loved her, kept silence and prayed,
He prayed that one day she might give him her heart.
He was old, she was young, and a gay little maid,
And she called him her father. He acted the part.

"Yet, as love has no rules for the young or the old,
He played badly, broke down, and she guessed at the truth;
He'd a title to heighten the gleam of his gold—
He gave her his riches; she gave him her youth.

"Did she love him? Who knows? Maybe, yes, for a time,
Then this scamp came about her; she listened and fled;
All the world was agog with the news of her crime,
But her husband remembered his oath to the dead.

"I'm a soldier, accustomed to barrack and camp,
And I can't put this case in the way that I ought,
And my words are too coarse for a deed of its stamp—
For an action diviner no man ever wrought!

" He went, did her husband, the man that you flout,
He followed the lovers and caught them in Spain ;
Met the cur, this young lord, and would not call him out ;
Brought his wife back and gave her his honour again.

" ' I swore to your father to guard you through life,'
Thus he spoke to the fool, looking straight in her eyes.
' I forgive you, and guard you—you still are my wife ;
Not a thing for the thoughtless to jeer and despise.

" ' For your error 'tis I who am chiefly to blame,
I forgot the old saying—December and May.
I atone for the wrong, and I shield you from shame ;
Be patient, and wait till God calls me away.'

" So he took her and kissed her, and now the world sneers
At a man whose brave deed should be written in gold,
And whose feet should be washed with a Magdalen's tears,
As the Saviour's were washed in the story of old.

"When you kneel at the throne of God's mercy above,
And you pray that your sin-begrimed soul He will lave,
Will you mock at this story of infinite love
And call him a fool who the sinful would save?"

"Dear me!" said the Duchess; "Ha, ha!" laughed the Earl,
"Comparing Sir George to—'pon honour, that's cool!"
The Duke gave his whiskers a fanciful twirl,
And murmured, "Forgive her!—the silly old fool!"

KATE MALONEY.

IN the winter, when the snowdrift stood against the cabin door,
Kate Maloney, wife of Patrick, lay nigh dying on the floor—
Lay on rags and tattered garments, moaning out with feeble breath,
"Knale beside me, Pat, my darlint; pray the Lord to give me death."

Patrick knelt him down beside her, took her thin and wasted hand,
Saying something to her softly that she scarce could understand.
"Let me save ye, O my honey! Only spake a single word,
And I 'll sell the goolden secret where it 's wanted to be heard.

"Sure it cuts my heart to see ye lyin' dyin' day by day,
When it's food and warmth ye're wanting just to dhrive yer pains away.
There 's a hundred goolden guineas at my mercy if ye will—
Do ye know that Mickey Regan 's in the hut upon the hill?"

Kate Maloney gripped her husband, then she looked him through and through;
"Pat Maloney, am I dhraming? Did I hear them words o' you?
Have I lived an honest woman, lovin' Ireland, God, and thee,
That now upon my deathbed ye should spake them words to me?

"Come ye here, ye tremblin' traitor; stand beside me now, and swear
By yer soul and yer hereafther, while he lives ye will not dare
Whisper e'en a single letter o' brave Mickey Regan's name.
Can't I die o' cold and hunger? Would ye have me die o' shame?

"Let the Saxon bloodhounds hunt him, let them show their filthy gold;
What 's the poor boy done to hurt 'em? Killed a rascal rich and old—
Shot an English thief who robbed us, grinding Irish peasants down,
Raisin' rints to pay his wantons and his lackeys up in town.

"We are beasts, we Irish peasants, whom these Saxon tyrants spurn;
If ye hunt a beast too closely, and ye wound him, won't he turn?
Wasn't Regan's sister ruined by the blackguard lying dead,
Who was paid his rint last Monday, not in silver, but in lead?"

Pat Maloney stood and listened, then he knelt and kissed his wife;
"Kiss me, darlint, and forgive me, sure I thought to save yer life;
And it 's hard to see ye dyin' when the gold 's within my reach.
I 'll be lonely when ye 're gone, dear,"—here a whimper stopped his speech.

* * * *

Late that night, when Kate was dozing, Pat crept cautiously away
From his cabin to the hovel where the hunted Regan lay;
He was there—he heard him breathing; something whispered to him, "Go!
Go and claim the hundred guineas—Kate will never need to know."

He would plan some little story when he brought her food to eat;
He would say the priest had met him, and had sent her wine and meat.
No one passed their lonely cabin; Kate would lie and fancy still
Mick had slipped away in secret from the hut upon the hill.

Kate Maloney woke and missed him; guessed his errand there and then;
Raised her feeble voice and cursed him with the curse of God and men.
From her rags she slowly staggered, took her husband's loaded gun,
Crying, "God, I pray Thee, help me, ere the traitor's deed be done!"

All her limbs were weak with fever, as she crawled
across the floor;
But she writhed and struggled bravely till she
reached the cabin door,
Thence she scanned the open country, for the moon
was in its prime,
And she saw her husband running, and she thought,
"There yet is time."

He had come from Regan's hiding, past the door,
and now he went
By the pathway down the mountain, on his evil
errand bent.
Once she called him, but he stopped not, neither
gave he glance behind,
For her voice was weak and feeble, and it melted
on the wind.

Then a sudden strength came to her, and she rose
and followed fast,
Though her naked limbs were frozen by the bitter
winter blast;
She had reached him very nearly when her new-
born spirit fled.
"God has willed it!" cried the woman, *then she
shot the traitor dead.*

From her bloodless lips, half frozen, rose a whisper to the sky,
"I have saved his soul from treason; here, O Heaven, let me die.
Now no babe unborn shall curse him, nor his country loathe his name;
I have saved ye, O my husband, from a deed of deathless shame."

No one yet has guessed their story; Mickey Regan got away,
And across the kind Atlantic lives an honest man to-day;
While in Galway still the peasants show the lonely mountain side
Where an Irishman was murdered and an Irishwoman died.



A FELLOW-FEELING.

"WON'T we drown the new-born puppies?"
Would you have me drown the lot—
All the pretty little babies
That our faithful Nellie's got?
Steady, steady, Master Johnny,
Sit you down and leave your play;
I've a story I must tell you
Ere we take those pups away.

Don't you know, my merry Johnny,
That you're father's darling boy—
In a world of work and trouble
Just his one and only joy?
Yet you'd sisters once, and brothers;
Laddie, look into my eyes
With that look that was your mother's—
Don't you see that daddy cries?

Come you closer to me, Johnny,
Come and sit upon my knee.
It is time you knew how Heaven
Took my little ones from me.
Hear it now, and in your bosom
Keep it treasured, boy, for aye—
Keep it there a sacred sorrow
To remember night and day.

I had seven little darlings,
Seven pretty boys and girls;
They had all your laughing dimples,
They had all your flaxen curls.
I had seven—five has Nellie,
And you 'd drown them every one;
Kiss me, boy, and hear the reason
Why I wouldn't have it done.

You have seen the little playthings
Stowed away in yonder room;
Ah, the little hands that held them
All lie folded in the tomb.
You have seen the pretty lady
In the picture by your bed—
That 's your mother, little Johnny,
"Darling mamma," who is dead.

Kiss me, boy, and clasp me tighter,
Fling your arms about my neck,
While I tell you all the horror
Of that cruel, cruel wreck.
In the pit-hole they are sleeping,
Mother, sisters, brothers too;
We were nine until it happened,
Now there's only me and you.

We were sailing up the river
On an autumn afternoon,
And you romped about beside us
To the music's merry tune.
"Little darlings!" said your mother,
As your joyous shouts rang clear,
Then there came a sudden terror
And a thousand cries of fear.

I will tell you when you 're older
All about that fearful night,
All the horrors of the moment
Burnt for ever on my sight.
In a second we were scattered,
Father, children—husband, wife;
In my arms I clasped you tightly,
And ran forward for my life.

I could see the angry waters
Whirling upward for their prey,
I could see my bonny darlings
Trampled down and swept away.
So I clasped you close and shouted,
Called your mother by her name,
Then I held my breath and listened,
But her answer never came.

Swift the waters closed above us,
Then we rose and kept afloat,
And I knew no more till someone
Seized and dragged us to a boat.
All my children God has taken;
Of the laughing bonny crew,
From that scene of cruel slaughter,
He had left me only you.

It was weeks, my boy, ere reason
Came again and let me think;
Once I raved in my mad anguish,
Wishing God had let me sink.
But in time the veil was lifted,
And the unwept tears could flow:
Then they brought me you, my darling,
And you broke the bitter blow.

Now I want you, little Johnny,
Just to think of what I 've said,
And to pray God's blessing nightly
On our darlings who are dead.
Kneel beneath your mother's picture,
Lifting up your gentle eyes,
And remember she is watching
From her mansion in the skies,

She can see us, and her babies
Are around her up above,
And she has them always with her,
While I 've only you to love.
But I think at times they 're with us—
That they creep in unawares:
I can see their smiling faces
In the row of empty chairs.

Kiss me, Johnny, kiss poor daddy,
Wipe away his foolish tears;
You and I will live together
Through the long and happy years.
No; we won't drown Nellie's puppies,
We, at least, that deed may shun;
Now you know, my pretty Johnny,
Why I wouldn't have it done.

MOLL JARVIS O' MORLEY.

A CONSTABLE'S TALE.

QUEER cattle is women to deal with? Lord bless ye, yer honour, they are!
I'd sooner be faced by ten navvies than tackle a woman, by far;
'Tain't only they bites and they scratches, and you mustn't not give it 'em back,
But their minds is so awful perwerted—they're such an obstropolous pack!

I can hunt down a burglar and nab him, and tackle the roughest o' rough,
But when it 's a female I 'm after I feels like a regular muff;
For I understands men and their natures, and I knows all their fly little lays,
But there isn't a orficer breathin' as is up to all feminine ways.

They be such a darned mixture o' feelin's—they
love and they hate in a breath,
They 'll be false to one cove in five minits, and
they 'll stick to another till death.
They're the blessedest big contrydiction as ever
creation has seen,
For they 've got such grand notions of honour, and
yet they 're so deucedly mean.

For a moment they 'll tremble and shiver, and
shriek if a spider comes near,
And the next they 'll look death in the face, sir,
with never a quiver o' fear;
As to minds, they ain't got none, I reckon—it 's
heart as prompts all as they do.
Have I seen some rum things with these women?
Yes, I fancy I have—one or two.

Case in point? Half a score, if you 're willin'—say
one—Well, I 'm blowed! look 'ee there,
See that woman a-turning the corner—that queer-
looking wench with the hair?
Case in point! Why, she 'll do for a good 'un.
She 's as mad as a hatter, sir, now;
For a man she went out of her senses, and it 's
worth yer a-hearin' tell how.

That wench there's Moll Jarvis o' Morley, the place
t'other side o' the wood—
Ev'ry man in the force here knows Molly—there's
pretty good reasons he should—
For the privates and sergeants and 'spectors, she
flummoxed 'em all to a coon,
And she left us like open-mouthed dummies
a-waggin' our heads at the moon.

'Twas in this way it happened: Her husband, a
horrible brute of a chap,
Was arrested for smashin' her skull in, and half
killing the babe in her lap.
He was tried, and her evidence taken; she softened
it down where she could;
But the women as seed him set on her, they told
how the real matter stood.

"Fifteen years," says the judge; then she fainted
and Tom he growls out, with an oath,
"Have a care for yourself and the brat, Moll; when
I'm free I'll just finish you both."
Then she knelt and she prayed to the judges to hear
what she'd gotten to say—
"Her Tom was mad drunk when he done it, and
he'd never been harsh till that day."

'Twas a lie; bless your soul, why he'd whacked her
and kicked her night, morning, and noon;
You 'd 'a' thought as she 'd dance at the sentence,
and think it a merciful boon.
'Twas a squeak for her life as he'd gave her, her
head was all strapped in the box,
And she trembled and shook as Tom eyed her—he
eyed her that day like a fox.

Lor, but women's rum cattle to deal with, the first
man found that to his cost,
And I reckon it's just through a woman the last man
on earth 'll be lost.
But that ain't my moral at present, I just wants to
prove to yer face
That we pleecemen ain't nothing to go by when a
woman gets into the case.

Just a month after Tom got his sentence, the news
come he 'd 'scaped from the gaol,
And the whole of us all round the county was
ordered to hunt on his trail.
She heard it, and went on her knees, sir, and prayed
as he 'd get clean away,
And in less than a week we 'd a notion we held
Master Thomas at bay.

He was there, in them woods over yonder. Them
woods is uncommonly thick,
And a man might be hidden a twelvemonth if he 'd
live on rank grass and a stick.
"Starve him out," says our chief; "draw a *cordon*
of officers right round the place.
Let him choose 'twixt starvation and capture; one
or other the beggar must face."

"They 're a-starvin' him out," says a gossip; and
Molly she heard what was said,
And she shrieked, and went into hysterics, and cried
as her husband was dead.
Till at last she could bear it no longer, so she
moaned and moved west'ard one day;
For it killed her, she said, to be watching while he
was a-dying that way.

Oh! a deep 'un was Molly, Lord bless you! She
made us look awfully small—
"Went off to her friends." We believed her; and
she never went off, sir, at all.
How she done it we never discovered; but she got
in them woods, past my nose—
Got clean in them woods to that blackguard, and
he got away in her clo's.

I see her come by as I fancied, and I gave her
" Good evenin' " as well,
And she nodded her head and went onward—did
ever ye hear such a sell?
It was him in her dress and her bonnet, he went and
he got slick away,
And we've never heard nowt o' the wiper, not a
whisper right up to to-day.

Yes, she'd gone to the woods to that villain, to the
bully who'd maimed her for life,
She had gone and she'd hugged him and kissed
him, I s'pose, like a dutiful wife.
Well, we waited a week; then come orders to beat
our way right through the wood,
And to capture the chap at all hazards, and shoot
him down dead if he stood.

And all as we found there was Molly, all white and
as weak as a rat,
Half-dressed and a-moanin' wi' terror and gnawing
her hands where she sat;
She'd 'a' stopped there and died of starvation to
give him more time to get free;
I could see the jade's game in a moment, and it
come like a bombshell on me.

For I saw on the face of the woman the red scar
stand out on the white,
Just the mark of the fist of the villain she 'd crept
there to aid in his flight;
And to think as she 'd perish o' hunger and suffer
the torments of hell
For the sake of the wretch who 'd half killed her and
had injured her baby as well.

No, she wasn 't not charged with a-aidin' and abettin'
the fellow's escape:
She was mad when we found her a-hidin', her reason
was clean out o' shape.
But she 's harmless enough, and she wanders, and
jabbers and jaws about him;
The folks about here knows her story, and humours
her every whim.

But don't talk to me about women; they ain't got
no reason nor brains,
And the man who goes in for to grip 'em is just a
big fool for his pains.
They're a blow to the force, that they are, sir; they
sends all our best plans to pot;
They 're a mixture o' saint and o' devil, and a
darned contrydictory lot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE DEVONSHIRE LANES.

I AM far from the land where my home is located,
For the Devonshire hills are some distance from town;
I am roaming the country, and fancy it's fated
The snow will at last condescend to come down.
In the creeks at my feet the wild sea dashes white in,
Each moment the wind in intensity gains;
'Tis a scene for the Londoner's heart to delight in,
When viewed from a bank in the Devonshire Lanes.

The hedgerows are set with the crystals of winter,
And ripe berries hiding from gay-feathered thieves;

The hand of December, the vigorous tinter,
Has browned and encarmined the exquisite leaves.
If the poet is fresh, with the ink on his fingers,
From tyrants who force him to harass his brains,
What wonder he sighs as he lovingly lingers
To gaze on the beauty of Devonshire Lanes?

Oh, here could I pass an enchanted existence,
Away from the evil behaviour of men,
The fields at my feet and the sea in the distance,
A poet no longer the slave of his pen.
The music of birds in the trees that surround me
Would gladden my banquet of herbs with their strains;
I'll accept the retreat that kind nature has found me,
And build me a hut in the Devonshire Lanes.

See the clouds overhead, how they scud and commingle,
The beautiful flakes are beginning to fall;
The cheek of the poet commences to tingle
When cut by the snow in a Devonshire squall.
It is miles to a village—the sign-posts are hidden,
And night o'er the landscape now rapidly gains.
If his language is strong, can the poet be chidden
Who 's lost in a snowstorm in Devonshire Lanes?

LE QUART D'HEURE DE RABELAIS.

WHO counts the cost when tables groan,
And round the flagon passes?
Let care beneath the boards be thrown,
Among the broken glasses.
Yet when through shutters closely barred
Peeps in the morning grey-time,
One toast the more can but retard
The fast-approaching pay-time.

Who counts the cost when Youth essays
To drain the cup of pleasure?
To squander life a thousand ways,
And dance the giddy measure?
But when the sun has ceased to shine,
And gone 's the making-hay-time,
Comes Ennui o'er the past to pine,
And weep that it is pay-time.

Who counts the cost when passing by
In all their vernal beauty
The cool sequestered nooks that lie
Along the path of Duty?
Our joyless eyes on earth we bend
Through all the pleasant May-time,
Till Winter meets us at the end,
And croaks that it is pay-time.

Who counts the cost when straight ahead
The golden goal is gleaming?
Let every aim but that lie dead,
All others worthless deeming.
Toil on, toil on from morn till eve,
Through night and noon and day-time,
Till Broken Health shall pluck your sleeve,
And Death proclaim it pay-time.

A GARDEN SONG.

SCORN the doubts and cares that hurt
The world and all its mockeries,
My only care is now to squirt
The ferns among my rockeries.

In early youth and later life
I've seen an up and seen a down,
And now I have a loving wife
To help me peg verbena down.

Of joys that come to womankind
The loom of fate doth weave her few,
But here are summer joys entwined
And bound with golden feverfew,

I've learnt the lessons one and all
With which the world its sermon stocks,
Now, heedless of a rise or fall,
I've Brompton and I've German stocks.

In peace and quiet pass our days,
With nought to vex our craniums,
Our middle beds are all ablaze
With red and white geraniums.

And like a boy I laugh when she,
In Varden hat and Varden hose,
Comes slyly up the lawn at me
To squirt me with the garden hose.

Let him who'd have the peace he needs
Give all his worldly mumming up,
Then dig a garden, plant the seeds,
And watch the product coming up.

IN LOVE AND WAR.

"I FAIN would weep!" doth Chloe cry,
When Strephon gives the kiss at parting,
And bids his love a last good-bye,
To distant climes on duty starting.
"I fain would weep, but on my cheeks
My grief would leave defacing streaks.

"Go forth and conquer, Strephon mine,
This kiss upon your lips retaining;
A precept that is also thine
Forbids the tear-drop hot and staining.
We're Mars and Venus, you and I,
And both must keep our powder dry."

A STREET SONG.

WE are told of the rose, that, though altered its name,
It would still be as fragrant and sweet;
And of course the logician would argue the same
If the subject discussed were a street.
There 's a thoroughfare fringing a Grecian abode—
'Tis of that, dearest reader, I 'd talk—
It is close to the famous-in-song City Road,
And is known as the Shepherdess Walk.

Now I won't for a moment endeavour to dwell
On the argument quoted above;
Since I own, though the place has an evident smell,
It is not of the kind that I love.

For the region is one where the costers prevail
(You can fancy the dainties they hawk),
And the odour of roses is not on the gale
One encounters in Shepherdess Walk.

What a change from the days when they christened the spot!
Then of course it was charming and green;
And Strephon might oft, when the mornings were hot,
Here with coy little Chloe be seen.
Now I gaze with disgust on the ill-favoured boys,
And the bold little hussies who gawk,
While I sigh for that era of pastoral joys
When here might a shepherdess walk.

A SILLY OLD MAN.

A SEA-SIDE DITTY.

MID all the nasty things that come to make
our tempers smart.
It 's very nice in middle age to have a
childish heart,
To feel—although you 've got a house, and taxes
coming due—
The little joys of early life possess a charm for you.
My boys and girls are growing up; I'm fifty in a
day;
And all the hair that time has left has turned a
doubtful grey;
And yet I jump and skip about and sing a song of
glee,
Because we 're off to spend a month beside the
sounding sea.

Where I shall wear my holland clothes, and tuck
them up and wade,
And buy myself an air-balloon, a bucket, and a
spade.

I've packed my box and corded it, and seen my
boys to bed,
And now I'm in the drawing-room and standing
on my head;
I really can't contain myself, I shout and rub my
hands,—
Oh, won't I build a castle with a moat upon the
sands!
I know this week I've lost a lot of money upon
'Change,
I know the kitchen boiler's burst and spoilt the
kitchen range,
I know my wife declares she wants another hundred
pounds,
And I should weep and tear my hair because I've
ample grounds;
But visions of to-morrow's bliss bid all my sorrows
fade,—
There's comfort in an air-balloon, a bucket, and a
spade.

I ought to be a solemn chap, and dress in black,
and frown,

And do as other fathers do when going out of town;
I ought to count the cost of it, and look extremely riled,
And swear that all the packing-up will send me nearly wild.
And when I reach the lovely sea I ought to take a seat,
Or walk about a mile a day and grumble at the heat;
But oh, I can't contain myself, I 'm off my head with joy,
And won't I get my trousers wet and be a naughty boy!
For I shall wear my holland clothes, and tuck them up and wade,
And buy myself an air-balloon, a bucket, and a spade.

FICKLE AS THE WIND.

BENEATH the shade of waving boughs
The gallant clasped the maiden's hand,
And urged her, with impassioned vows,
To fly to some far-distant land,
Where ev'ry joy their love would bless:
The maiden blushed, and faltered "Yes."

The soft breeze sighed around the tree,
And whispered to the flutt'ring leaf:
Come, soar, my dainty love, with me,
Beyond the realms of care and grief.
And straight—so well his suit he prest—
The leaf lay smiling on his breast.

But soon the breeze his arms unwound;
For leaves more lovely caught his eye,
And on the cold polluted ground
He left his love to weep and sigh.
Then men with harsh unthinking tread
Passed o'er the leaf and crushed it dead.

Two moons within his false embrace
The gallant held the trusting maid;
Then cast her on the world, to face
The fate of innocence betrayed.
Ah, maid and leaf! too late ye find
What fickle things are man and wind!

A SET OFF.

WITH aching heart beneath my vest
I wandered through the busy Strand,
And like a patriot felt oppress
By ills that hurt my native land.
"The knife," I mused, "the Tories wield
Is keener than the winds of May."
Just then a bill these words revealed:
"Asparagus is cheap to-day."

Like one transfixed I stood, and read
That notice in a fruit-shop hung;
Grim sorrow flapped her wings and fled,—
Again the world was green and young.
"Let tyrants smirch our fame," I cried,
"And vote our hard-won wealth away,
We yet may stem the rising tide:
Asparagus is cheap to-day!"

What matters though the foolish swine
Obey the madcap pig-herd's shout,
And grunting in unsav'ry line
Upturn sweet pastures snout to snout!
What matters though our noble knights
By such a herd are held at bay!
Here 's solace for our bitter slights:
"Asparagus is cheap to-day."

For one short moment let us cease
To mourn the loss of mighty ships—
Forget how tax and rate increase,
And all that now the nation "hips."
From dreary paths of shame and guile,
To verdant fields my footsteps stray,
Dame Fortune is not wholly vile:
"Asparagus is cheap to-day."

A PASTORAL.

I SAT beside my Phillis fair,
Just hidden from the noonday glare,
Where drooping branches caught
the rays
That came upon my love to gaze;
Then sent them all to dance about
Upon the velvet sward without.
Sweet sentinels are leafy boughs
To guard a lover's sighs and vows.

The scent of woodland blossoms filled
The shady arbour, hushed and stilled.
Old numbers through my mem'ry rang,
And, dreaming, I to Phillis sang:
"My love is like the gentle breeze
That sighs among the waving trees,
Or like the sun that warms the earth,
And gives each gentle flow'ret birth.

"My love is like the sweetest rose
That in a southern garden grows;
Nay, give her place—rose, breeze, and sun,
My lady fair is all in one."
So sang I to my love, and she
Upturned her deep blue eyes to me,
And raised her finger's rosy tips
To lay them on her laughing lips.

"Oh, fie! my Damon, fie!" she cried,
"In borrowed plumes why dress your bride?
The breeze is but a changing wind
That cuts and kills in mood unkind;
The sun will scorch the bud new born
The sweetest rose has many a thorn.
Oh, let me be, dear love, to you
A simple woman, fond and true."

THE BALLADS OF BABYLON.

To JOHN RYDER, Esq.,

The eminent Actor and Professor of Elocution, these Ballads are dedicated by his sincere Friend and Admirer,

GEORGE R. SIMS.



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BALLADS OF BABYLON.

OVERTURE.

FROM Babylon the mighty, for ever and for aye,
Float the voices of her toilers and the fighters in the fray—
Float the voices of her victims high above the battle's din,
As they chant in fitful measure all the ballads of her sin.

From Babylon the mighty the monster chorus swells,
A cry to one vague heaven from all the million hells;
The wail of souls despairing, the curse of maddened woe,
The shriek of hunted wretches who flee the ruthless foe.

I hear the half-hushed whisper, the growing murmurs, then
The deep hoarse cry for vengeance of fierce and frenzied men—
The wild barbaric music that crashes through the spheres,
To die away in echoes of the women's sobs and tears.

I hear the lonely singer who wanders from the crowd,
Whose song is sung in secret, with blanched face earthward bowed,
Who shuns the swollen chorus and seeks His ear alone,
To tell a God of sorrows what sorrows men have known.

From Babylon the mighty, for ever and for aye,
Float the voices of her toilers and the fighters in the fray—
Float the voices of her victims high above the battle's din,
As they chant in fitful measure all the ballads of her sin.

FALLEN BY THE WAY.

DON'T be a fool and blub, Jim, it's a darned good thing for you—
You'll find a mate as can carry and 'll play the music too;
I'm done this time, for a dollar—I can hardly get my breath;
There's something as tells me, somehow, "Bill Joy, you be took for death."
It's a wessel gone bust, and a big 'un; I can hardly speak for blood;
It's the last day's tramp as 'as done it—the hills and the miles o' mud.
There ain't not the sign of a light, Jim, in this God-forsaken spot—
Hunt for some warter, pardner, for my lips is burnin' hot.

How much ha' we took to-day, Jim? Why not a single brown,
And our show was one o' the best once, and we *rode* from town to town;
Now it's dirty and old and battered, and the puppets is wus for wear,
And their arms and their legs is shaky, and their backs is reg'lar bare.
I ain't done my share o' the work, mate, since I went that queer in the chest,
But I done what I could, old fellow, and you know as I did my best;
And now—well, I'm done, I reckon; it's life as is flowing fast—
Stick to me, Jim—don't leave me; it's the end as is come at last.

There's Toby a-waggin' his tail there; poor chap, how he'll miss me, Jim!—
Whoever you takes for mate, mind, they ain't to be 'ard on 'im;
For I 'ad him a six weeks' puppy, and I taught him to box with Punch—
What was that sound in the distance? I fancied I heard a scrunch.

Nothin'—ah well, no matter! I thought 'twas a
footstep p'r'aps.
A traveller as might ha' helped us, or one o' them
farmer chaps.
A doctor might stop the bleedin'; but there's never
a chance o' one.
I'll be cold and dead in the mornin'—yer poor old
pardner's done.

I feel just as if I was chokin' and I'm, O, so faint
and low;
Prop me agen the boxes, so I can see the
show—
The dear old show and the puppets, Judy and
Punch and all;
I'd like just to see 'em again, Jim—so prop me afore
I fall.
O the miles that we've been together, I and the
puppets and you
And Toby, our faithful Toby—ah, when the show
was new!
Do ye think of the time, old fellow, when first we
took the road,
And *she* was with us, God bless her! and never a
grief we knowed?

It may be as God'll let her look down from the sky
to-night,
From out o' the stars up yonder, where she sits in
the Halls o' Light—
Look down on the poor old showman and see as his
time is nigh,
And he's comin' to join his darlin' where there's
never no more Good-bye!
O, Jim, how I well remember the night as my
sweetheart died,
When she lay by the wee dead baby, only a nine
months' bride.
'Twas the fall from the stilts as did it, and the wild,
rough life we led:
D'ye mind what she whispered dyin'—the beautiful
words she said?

'Twas when she knew she was goin'; I'm seeing
her wan white cheek
And the sweet sad smile that lit it when she tried so
hard to speak;
When she took our hands and joined 'em, and bade
us, through bad and good,
Be pals, and stick tight to each other! and both
on us said we would.

I knew as you loved her fust, Jim, and had loved
her all along,
And I see how you 'id yer feelin's when you see as
you'd counted wrong;
But you stuck like a pal to the show, Jim, and you
worked and whistled away,
And *she* never guessed your secret, or she wouldn't
ha' been so gay.

I fancy the dear old days, Jim, when she was alive,
poor lass—
The feasts that we had by the hedges, and the chats
in the long green grass,
And the cosy nights at the taverns, when the coin
came rolling in:
How we laughed when she puffed our baccy, and
pretended to drink our gin!
Then Toby, a gay young fellow, would lie by the
fire and doze,
While the missis worked at the puppets, and altered
and turned their clo's;
And Judy and Punch and Joey were never so smart
before,
And the Ghost had a nice white gown on, as a
clergyman might ha' wore.

She went in the cruel winter, when the bread was
hard to get,
When we tramped and slept in the cowsheds, hungry
and cold and wet.
How far am I from her grave, Jim? Ah, a hundred
miles maybe;
To lie by the side o' one's darlin' ain't meant for
the likes o' me.
The parish 'll bury me here, Jim—here where I
chance to die;
Come to the grave and see me, and bid me a last
good-bye.
You can bring the show and the puppets, and Toby,
and beat the drum;
Who knows but that I may hear it in the wonderful
Kingdom Come?

I'm goin', old pal—don't blubber and look with that
skeered white face;
Stand by me here to the last, lad; it's a horrible
lonely place;
Stoop, for I'll have to whisper—O, my eyes grow
strange and dim,
And I feel like poor old Punch feels when the hang-
man comes to him.

I warn't much use as a pardner, and I ain't not
been for a year,
This bustin' o' wessels and corfin' has made me that
awful queer,
I'd like to ha' got to a willage or ha' crawled as fur
as a shed:
Jim, if I lose my senses, stay till yer know I'm
dead.

O, it's hard to die in the open—here on a country
road;
That's a matter o' sentymunt, ain't it? well
sentymunt jes' be blowed!
For where can a cove die better than under a starlit
sky,
With his pardner's arms about him, and a tear in
his pardner's eye?
Now I want yer to do me a favour—it's the last as
I'll ask ye, Jim—
There's a mist comin' over my eyeballs, and my
senses seems to swim;
Set up the show in the road there—there where the
moonlight be—
Let down the baize and work it, now, while I've
strength to see.

Give me the drum a minit—I can hardly raise the stick;
Now, are ye ready, pardner?—up with the curtain, quick!
The blood comes faster and faster—that's it! Ah, Punch, old boy,
And Judy, and there's the Baby, and Toby, the children's joy.
Poor Toby, he knows there's trouble; for see how he hangs his tail;
Bark at the Bobby, Toby, he's a-takin' old Punch to gaol.
Where have you gone to, pardner? Where have you put the show?
I see but the big, black shadows that darker and darker grow.

I know what it is—the signal! Put down the pipes and drum.
I'm off to the distant country—the touch on the shoulder's come.
Shall I take any message for you, Jim? I shall see her up there, maybe,
And I'll tell her how hard you worked, mate, and the pal as you've been to me.

Jim, when I'm gone I wants yer just to look in the box and take
The ragged old dress we kept there and treasured for her sweet sake—
The dress that she made for Judy—and lay it upon my breast;
And I want you, the day I'm buried, to give the show a rest.

Bring 'em away to the churchyard, and show 'em their master's grave.
Now take up your pipes and blow 'em, and tip us a farewell stave.
Mind, when you're choosin' a mate, Jim, don't have a rogue or muff;
Make him handle the puppets gentle, for they've never been treated rough.
Give me the dog a minit—see how he licks my cheek,
Now for a tune on the pipes, mate, and speak as the puppets speak;
It's the music I've lived my life to—let me hear it again and die.
I'm a-goin' to her—I'm goin'—God bless yer, Jim! —good-bye.

ONE WINTER NIGHT.

RAGGED, wretched, worn and weary,
Come the casuals, creeping in,
Where the Parish nightly shelters
Shame and sorrow, sloth and sin;
Where the wounded in life's battle,
Pushed aside and trodden down,
Share the Poor Law's tender mercy
With the refuse of the town.

When the night has flung her mantle
Rags and tatters kindly o'er,
Come the outcasts, meekly knocking
At the black, forbidding door.
All the storm-tossed human wreckage,
Sport for fortune's changing tide,
Hither drifts as to a harbour—
Foul and fair float side by side.

Here, through all the long night watches,
Want and woe can rest their heads:
Who shall say what bygone blisses
Hover round these narrow beds?
Stained with travel, bent and broken,
Here the starving outcast lies,
Yet he smiles—some happy vision
Sleep has drawn across his eyes.

Sleep has come to weary eyelids,
Dreams have come to tortured brains,
And in dreams perchance they wander
Freely o'er life's pleasant plains.
Look where lies a woman sleeping,
Moaning even in her rest,
With a wee, wan baby pillowed
On her chill and shrivelled breast.

In her sleep she sees the husband
Whom the cruel fever slew,
While he sought the honest labour
He was all too weak to do.
Faint and footsore, broken-hearted,
Cold and hunger did their work:
Charity that might have saved him
Went abroad to help the Turk.

When the throes of death were on him,
With a groan he raised his head,
And he cried, " O God, have mercy
On my darlings when I'm dead!"
Then his dying kiss he gave them—
All that he had left to give—
Still the craved-for mercy tarries,
For his wife and baby *live*.

* * *

'Tis the Sabbath, and a woman,
With a baby on her knee,
Sits among the poor who worship
In the sittings labelled " Free."
From the cutting blast of winter
She has sought a refuge there,
Though the peasants eye her fiercely,
Wondering " how such creatures dare."

Rent and ragged are her garments,
Pinched and pallid is her face;
She is tramping from the workhouse
To her distant native place.
Here she rests awhile and listens
In the warm and cosy church,
While the vicar reads a sermon
From his velvet-cushioned perch.

For a special sermon chosen
Is the Saviour's gentle speech,
When He blessed the little children,
Laying loving hands on each;
And the parson tells his people
How God loves the children well,
And will take them to his bosom
In the golden land to dwell.

"Dry your eyes," he says, "O mourners,
When your cherished darlings die;
Think how warm within God's bosom
In that happy land they lie.
There no more can pain and anguish
Wring the heart and cloud the brow—
They are past all sin and sorrow,
They are happy angels now."

Peals the music of the organ
As the people pass away;
O'er the fields they hurry homeward,
For the skies are ashen grey;
And a homeless creature totters
From God's temple with the rest;
In her heart His loving promise,
And a baby at her breast.

* * *

Hark, the tempest howls in fury,
And the snow is falling fast,
As an outcast sinks exhausted,
For her strength gives way at last.
She is lost upon the moorland,
Daylight's last faint glimmer fled,
And the shelter that she seeks for
Lieth weary miles ahead.

She is blinded by the snowstorm,
And her limbs are numb with cold;
In her rags she wraps the baby
That her weak arms scarce can hold.
She can feel its frozen body,
She can hear its piteous cry,
And she thinks as on she staggers,
What—O God—if she should die!

If her senses should desert her,
And through all the cruel night
Here her babe should slowly perish—
Ah, thank God!—she sees a light.
No, her eyes are dim with anguish,
'Twas a star peeped through a cloud.
Hark, the blast grows fierce and fiercer,
And the baby moans aloud.

Then the mother clasps it closer,
While her chill lips press its cheeks;
As her strength comes back a moment,
In a strange, wild way she speaks:
"Go, O baby dear!" she murmurs,
"From my breast, all cold and dry,
Go to where, in God's warm bosom,
All the happy babies lie."

Pass the preacher's words of comfort
Swiftly through her tortured brain;
High above her stretch the heavens
Where they know not grief and pain.
What had earth to give her baby?
What could be its life below?
Just one long, long spell of torture,
Years of hunger, want, and woe.

Down she kneels, poor maddened mother—
God forgive her wicked hand
As it frees a soul, and sends it
Up to seek the promised land!
Then she leaves her tiny burden,
All so still and quiet now;
Stoops to print two loving kisses
Softly on its marble brow.

* * *

Late that night they found her, living,
And the law condemned her crime.
"Death!" cried Justice, passing sentence.
But before the fatal time,
He who took her burden from her
Flung her prison gates ajar—
He perchance lets tortured mothers
Pass to where their babies are.



THE MATRON'S STORY.

SHE was drunk—mad drunk—was Molly,
the night that I saw her first;
I'd seen some terrible cases, but hers
was the very worst.
This refuge had just been started for the daughters
of night and sin,
And I was the matron here, sir, on the night that
they brought her in.

Her face was flushed and swollen, and a blow had
cut her eye,
And the blood that had oozed unnoticed on her
cheek was caked and dry.
She laughed with a hoarse, wild laughter, and
capered and kicked about,
And she swore and she cursed so foully we thought
we must turn her out.

She'd come for a spree, as often these poor lost creatures come.
They hear of our "midnight meetings" away in their filthy slum;
I've seen 'em jump up on the platform and fling down the chairs and shriek,
And join in a ribald chorus when the clergyman tried to speak.

But Molly was worse than any—she staggered across the place
And picked up a brass-bound hymn-book and aimed at our chaplain's face;
It cut him across the cheek-bone, and he uttered a cry of pain,
Then we rushed at Molly to seize her, but she struggled with might and main.

She bit and she tore and scratched us, and kicked like a beast at bay,
Then all of a sudden reeled forward, and still as a mouse she lay;
In the struggle her wound was injured, and the blood flowed down apace,
And the same sort of mark we noticed was on hers and the chaplain's face.

What a fist had done for Molly the hymn-book had
done for him ;
He was only a young beginner, and he trembled in
every limb ;
For the wound was deep and painful, but he pushed
his way through the crowd,
And cleared his voice with an effort, and spoke
these words aloud :

" Poor lass, may the Lord forgive her as I forgive
her too ! "
And silent, as if by magic, stood the whole of the
yelling crew;
While he, with his face all bleeding, did the words
of the Saviour quote,
That the left cheek should be offered to one who
the right cheek smote.

He came where we held the wanton, and he moved
his lips in prayer,
And smoothed from her bloody features the masses
of tangled hair.
" Take her away," he whispered, " and see that her
wound is drest,"
Then he spake aloud the blessing, and then he dis-
missed the rest.

We kept the girl at the Refuge right from the hour she swooned
Till time and a kindly surgeon had thoroughly healed the wound;
In a week it was closed completely, but leaving a mark to mar,
And the face of the poor lost creature and *his* had the self-same scar.

The day she was well she left us—left us with never a word;
Went back to the awful outcasts with whom such women herd;
And now and again we gathered news of the life she led:
"In the hospital," once they told us, and then that the girl was dead.

It was five years after that, sir, one night went our faithful priest
On a mission of love and mercy to an awful place down East—
To a den where the lowest women herd with the vilest thieves—
They're some of the very worst, sir, that our Refuge here receives.

He'd heard from a girl who came here tales of this
Devil's place,
And he made up his mind to storm it, armed with
the word of Grace.
His face flushed red as he told us, and spoke of the
souls to win.
And the task that the Lord had set him in that haven
of shame and sin.

He laughed when we spoke of danger, and that
night went forth alone,—
But we had a strange misgiving which we hardly
liked to own ;
He was back on the stroke of midnight—back from
the jaws of hell,
But his face was pale and ghastly, he'd a strange
wild tale to tell.

He had entered that filthy alley and spoken God's
Word aloud,
Till the people swarmed about him in a thick and
threatening crowd ;
And they jeered and they spat and hooted, and the
women were worst of all,
For they picked up filth to pelt him, and drove him
against the wall.

Beaten and bruised and smothered, he then would have turned and fled,
When a well-aimed brickbat struck him full on his hatless head.
Then he turned quite sick and giddy, and felt himself dragged along,
And a door was slammed in the faces of the threatening, murderous throng.

And beside him there stood a woman—he could hardly see her face,
For a foul and a noisome darkness hung o'er the dreadful place.
"Hush for your life!" she whispered, "I've bolted and barred the door;
They'd 'ave your blood if I'd let 'em—hark, how the tigers roar!

"They found out as you're the parson as 'tices the gals away,
They say it's through you they peaches and goes on the 'Christian' lay.
I dragged you in here and saved you, and sent out a gal for the slops*;
Ha, they're a-comin', sir! Listen! the noise and the shoutin' stops."

* The police. The word—originally back slang, "ecilop"—has passed into the ordinary argot of the street.

The noise was changed in a moment to a hiss and
a sullen groan,
The woman crept close and listened, then open the
door was thrown,
And there was a sergeant standing with six of his
tallest men,
And our chaplain walked between them out of that
awful den.

And just as they reached the entry, lo, a woman's
piercing shriek
Told of the brutal vengeance the ruffians tried to
wreak.
He guessed what it was, did the sergeant, and hurry-
ing back they found
The woman who'd saved our chaplain all of a heap
on the ground.

The crowd in their brutal fury had beaten the
woman down,
They kicked at her prostrate body till the red blood
stained her gown ;
But nobody knew who'd done it—the cowards had
slunk away,
Her face was all white and ghastly in the light of
the bull's-eye's ray.

'Twas the face of an old acquaintance our chaplain saw that night;
By the scar on the cheek he knew her, in the lantern's quivering light—
'Twas Molly, the long lost Molly, the girl that we thought was dead—
She beckoned him down and whispered, and these were the words she said:

"I know'd yer to-night by yer scar, sir, the scar o' the cut I made;
I heerd how yer treated me then, sir; how yer give me yer blessin' and prayed,
And I sez when I see yer in danger: Moll, you've a debt to pay,
So I dragged yer away in yonder, and I 'eld them curs at bay."

Died? No, she didn't; we saved her—she's matron here under me;
That's she—and ah, here comes the chaplain—now *both* the scars you can see.
And often we tell the story, how the Lord in His tender grace
Saved a life and a soul together all through a scar on the face.

SIR RUPERT'S WIFE.

YOU see where the cliffs frown yonder in a line of dingy red?—
The wild, fierce crag, the highest, is known as Sir Rupert's Head:
It's five hundred feet and over from the brow to the sea below,
And it won its name in the winter a hundred years ago.
There wasn't a squire in Devon so famous as Rupert Leigh;
He was lord of these broad, rich acres, good-looking and fancy free.
He came of a race of giants, stood six-feet-two in his socks,
And once, for a drunken wager, with his fist he had felled an ox.

"Dare-devil Leigh" was his nickname, he was last of a lawless line
Who had gone to the deuce full gallop, through women and cards and wine.
He wasn't so bad as they were—he was more of a hunting squire,
And he freed the name a little from some of the ancient mire.
His wasn't an easy country, but he'd take it every inch,
And ride as straight as an arrow where the boldest well might flinch.
When a lad he had climbed yon headland, climbed it from base to crest,
For a short-frocked hussy who wanted the eggs in a seagull's nest.

One winter he went to London—he was then about forty-three;
His steward had told the parson he'd lawyers in town to see.
'Twas dull in the place without him, for his mansion was Liberty Hall;
There was always a warm wet welcome for neighbours who chose to call.

He was gone for a twelvemonth nearly, writing to no old friends,
But a Devonshire man in London news to the parson sends.
Sir Rupert had married a madam, a play-acting, mincing wench,
Who painted and patched and powdered, and was finikin, fine, and French.

She was no more French than I am, but this was about the time
That French was the title given to nigh every kind of crime.
She sang at a minor play-house—in opera, so they say—
And he saw her as Polly Peachum in that famous work by Gay.
He was always an easy target for a wench's rolling eye.
So it got to bouquets and presents, and to letters by-and-by.
He was wax in the hussy's fingers, and she moulded with practised skill,
Till he took the form of a husband, the slave of her slightest will.

They travelled about a little, saw Paris, the Hague, and Rome—
Then the news went abroad Sir Rupert was bringing his lady home.
The people about here liked him, and no warmth did their welcome lack,
But they looked askance at my lady, and she gave them their glances back.
They hated her then directly, they chafed at her cold disdain,
And they gossiped her story over in language a bit too plain.
They called her a "stuck-up stroller," and somehow the scandal grew,
Till my lady as "Polly Peachum" the whole of the country knew.

Sir Rupert was broken-hearted when he heard of the mocking tone,
And he quarrelled with all his comrades until he was left alone—
Alone at the Hall with "Polly," for the gentry had cut her dead,
But his heart was as true as ever to the woman he'd stooped to wed.

To him she was just an angel who'd come from the holy skies
That his heart might bask for ever in the light of her lustrous eyes.
No wine, no cards, and no hunting: he kept at my lady's side—
'Twas a great big boy with a sweetheart, not a man with a year-won bride.

She pined in the lonely mansion; she wanted society—life—
She wanted to play my lady as well as Sir Rupert's wife.
Sir Rupert must ask a party—not of bumpkins, but folks from town:
He had plenty of friends in London; would he not ask them down?
They came, and the sound of laughter rang through the Hall once more,
And my lady was proud and happy, but her husband's heart was sore;
He had learned from an idle whisper—a whisper not meant for him—
A secret that sapped his life-blood and the strength of each stalwart limb.

He reeled when he heard the whisper and guessed
at the ghastly truth:
'Twas the tale of a player-woman and a curled and
scented youth,
A dandy of six-and-twenty, the son of an old, old
chum—
He was one of the guests invited, and one of the
first to come.
Sir Rupert had been in London a guest at his
father's, too,
And this young fop, he remembered, had led him
his wife to woo;
He had raved of this Polly Peachum, and dragged
him to hear her sing;
He said at the time he knew her—'twas a planned
and a plotted thing!

And now she was always with him, they chatted
and laughed away;
She was cold and dull with Sir Rupert,—with him
she was kind and gay.
She was weary of playing my lady, of being Sir
Rupert's wife—
She pined for the tinsel glories of the old
Bohemian life;

She hated the dull decorum, she hated the legal tie—
Her cage was a cage, though gilded. Then the tempter whispered "Fly!"
One night both their chairs were empty, and slowly the news leaked out:
Two horses were gone from the stable—'twas a settled thing, no doubt.

Sir Rupert was white with horror, but he turned to the gaping crew
And cried, "It's a lie, I tell you!—who dares to say it's true?"
Then seizing his holster pistols, he mounted his fleetest mare
And made straight for the Red Cliff roadway—he guessed they had gone by there.
For that was the way to London, from Exmouth the pair would post,
And the road they were bound to travel was the road by the rugged coast.
If you look you will see it passes right over the headland's brow—
Only a century distant it wasn't so good as now.

He dug his spurs in the hunter, and it flew up the fearful steep.
'Twas a wild, fierce night in the winter, and the snow lay thick and deep;
But the moon through the clouds had broken, and right on the Head he spied
A horse that had slipped and fallen, and the rider by its side;
And over them bent a figure, but whose he could scarcely see,
Then he uttered a cry to Heaven that his wife unharmed might be;
And lashing his steed to fury, it flew through the slippery snow,
While the wild waves roared a warning five hundred feet below.

A slip, and both horse and rider would roll to a hideous fate,
But Sir Rupert, with set white features, rode to the headland straight.
They heard him now, and the woman rose from her knees and moaned.
And the man gave a sudden shudder and opened his eyes and groaned.

Sir Rupert reined up so fiercely that the mare on
the precipice reared,
And the woman sprang back with horror, in the
jaws of the death she feared.
For a moment she seemed to totter, and then with
a piercing cry
Went over that awful headland that seems to touch
the sky.

For a second no sound was uttered, only the
billows roared.
While up from its nest a seagull, startled and
shrieking, soared;
Then, shouting for help, Sir Rupert clutched at the
snow-clad turf,
And glanced with a look of horror down at the
boiling surf.
And as he lay there peering, right at the farthest
edge,
Something his eyes detected—a heap on a narrow
ledge;
It was thirty feet between them, but he knew 'twas
his wretched wife,
And he vowed, though his own paid forfeit, he
would save her guilty life.

He could see there were tiny juttings where his
foot might find a hold,
And the man he had quite forgotten was worth his
weight in gold.
The booby was bruised and shaken, and fancied
that he should die,
But Sir Rupert bade him help him or he'd shoot
him by-and-by.
Then the white-faced coward whimpered and lifted
his jewelled hands,
And Sir Rupert set him tearing his mantle in
narrow bands.
Then the strips were twined together and tied to a
rough stone seat,
And over went brave Sir Rupert, clinging with
hands and feet.

The waves in their winter fury shrieked for a
human life,
But down and down crept Rupert till he swung by
his senseless wife.
Stooping, he clasped her firmly, one hand on the
doubtful rope,
Pressed his lips on her marble forehead, and
whispered her, "Darling—hope!"

Then breathing a prayer to Heaven to save them
both that night,
He toiled with his heavy burden up the face of the
frowning height.
A fall of the soft red sandstone, a slip of his
bleeding hand,
And their bodies had lain together, crushed on the
cruel strand.

Safe! safe at last on the summit! safe on the firm
hard road!
There where the moonbeans glittered, he glanced
at his senseless load.
Her face was bruised and battered, and the warm
blood welled and gushed;
And he saw that his wife was injured, and her
tender bones were crushed.
No trace of the lady's gallant; he'd limped to a
horse and flown:
Sir Rupert and "Polly Peachum" were there on
the heights alone.
He leaped on the gallant hunter, took his wife in
his brawny arms,
And galloped across the country to one of his
tenants' farms.

For six long months my lady hovered 'twixt death and life—
'Twas a surgeon who came from London that saved Sir Rupert's wife—
And when she was out of danger it was known she was marked and maimed—
A battered, misshapen cripple, distorted and scarred and lamed.
But Sir Rupert clung closer to her, they travelled from place to place,
And he never winced or shuddered at the sight of her injured face.
It was he who carried the cripple, who nursed her with tenderest care:
And never in knightly story such gallant had lady fair.

For many a year she lingered—'twas up at the Hall she died,
And here in the village churchyard they're sleeping side by side.
She died in his arms confessing the worth of his noble love,
And in less than a year he sought her in the mansions of God above.

There stands the great bluff headland—there swells
the sea below—
And the story I've told you happened nigh a
hundred years ago.
Yet there isn't a soul that visits those towering
crags of red
But thinks of the love and daring that hallowed
"Sir Rupert's Head."





A CHRISTMAS STORY.

THEY quarrelled on Christmas night,
Fell out, and it came to blows.
No! it wasn't a stand-up fight;
For the woman was one of those
Who love like a faithful dog,
With a love as deep as mute.
Will was primed with the Christmas grog,
And drunk he was just a brute.

A wee frail thing was she,
A trembling, pale-faced wench;
And a burly chap was he,
With a giant's fist to clench.
He clenched it that night with rage
At something his help-meet said;—
Some counsel discreet and sage—
It was that to the quarrel led.

It was but a loving word,
Just a thrifty wife's advice;
She wasn't a scold to gird,
But his wrath was up in a trice.
He was always a hasty chap,
And quick with a word and blow;
If he hadn't been drunk, mayhap,
Things wouldn't have happened so.

He up with his fist, did Will,
And he hit her across the head—
She groaned, and then all was still,
And she lay like a lump of lead.
She had fallen across the chair,
And her face was white as death;
He opened the door for air,
And listened to hear her breath.

He looked in her ashen face
And saw where his fist had hit—
Near the temple—a nasty place—
And the skin with the blow had split.
Down on his knees he fell,
Sobered and shaking now;
In his heart he had loved her well,
And it was but a drunken row.

Dead!—not a sign of life,
Not a flutter—he strained his ears;
He gazed on his murdered wife
With a thousand ghastly fears.
His brain was aflame. He thought
Of the murderer's awful doom;
Safety in flight he sought,
And rushed from the haunted room.

He wandered and wandered far
Away from the ghastly sight,
Seeing in every star
God's eye on that Christmas night.
With her wraith at his heels he flew,
Travelled and sought the sea,
And, joining a rabble crew,
Sailed for the wild West free.

Over the whole earth's face,
Bearing the brand of Cain—
Now in some savage place,
Now on the distant main—
Wandered the guilty wretch,
Haunted by night and day,
With his hands too foul to stretch
Up to the skies and pray.

Haggard and worn and weak,
Men read in his deep-lined brow
A story he dared not speak,
And all of them shunned him now.
Outcast, with never a friend
Under the world-wide sky,
Longed he his life to end,
Yet did he fear to die.

Accursed of God he bore
The weight of a voiceless woe
Till the years he counted as four
Since he struck the fatal blow.
And the Christmas time came round
As they sighted a famous strand,
Where Old England's sons have found
A home in a foreign land.

There the bells rang out a chime
On the sultry Christmas morn,
To tell of the sweet glad time
When Christ the Lord was born.
They rang in the outcast's ears
A message of tender love;
Then, his face all wet with tears,
He prayed to the God above.

And when from his knees he rose
There was hope in the sinner's breast;
He had seen how his life should close—
God had pointed the path to rest.
Homeward he bent his way,
Home to the far-off goal,
To tell in the light of day
The secret that seared his soul.

* * *

Ah! weary the road has been,
But the pilgrim stands at last
There on the old, old scene,
There with the ghastly past.
He will see where he struck the blow
Ere he goes to his righteous fate,
And then shall grim justice know
Who knocks at her iron gate.

He will whisper his secret then
That is known but to God on high;
It soon shall be known of men—
What will it cost to die?
'Twas God, when he prayed, who lent
Peace to his tortured breast,
By Him was the pilgrim sent
That confession his soul might rest.

He stands in the early morn
 There, where the deed was done,
Just as the light is born
 Of the faint December sun.
He peers in the tiny room,
 Then reels with a scared white face—
Is it part of his awful doom
 That *her* ghost shall haunt the place?

There!—there on the cursed spot!—
 "Mercy, O God!" he cries;
And his breath comes fast and hot—
 How she stares with those sweet blue eyes!
She comes down the garden walk
 With her arms outstretched to him;
Can a phantom in daylight stalk
 As it does in the twilight dim?

She comes, and he tries to scream,
 "Back! phantom of flesh and blood!"
'Tis a murderer's ghastly dream;
 Yet hark, how her heart goes thud!
It is she! 'Tis his winsome wife!
 No ghost from a noisome tomb;
Her kiss has the warmth of life,—
 He is saved from a murderer's doom.

* * *

Hark, how the bells ring out
 Sweet on the frosty air;
God's message—ah! never a doubt—
 "Behold how I answer prayer."
Told is the story soon
 How she whom he fancied dead
Had come from her death-like swoon
 Only to find him fled.

"He has left me," she thought, and wept.
 "He has left me for evermore!"
Yet true had her fond heart kept
 As slowly the years passed o'er.
It is Noël, the glad bells say,
 As they clang from the steeple's height;
Let the joy of this Christmas Day
 Atone for that Christmas night.

A SILVER WEDDING.

"TO Dick on our silver wedding, from
Harold and Elspeth Grey"—
Give me my glasses, nephew. Is that
what the letters say?
How stiffly these lockets open. Ah, there's a spring,
I see,
A picture of both, God bless them! to show that
they think of me.
Did ever you see two faces so sweet and calm and
kind?
Their ocean of life can hardly have known a
boisterous wind.
Look at their happy features—the peace in the
eyes of each—
Ah, strange is the tale they'd tell you had pictures
the gift of speech.

To-day is their silver wedding—a fourth of a century's past
Since, after a fierce, wild tempest, they came to their rest at last;
And I who had known their story, who from boyhood had been *his* friend,
Knelt with them both at the altar where their lives were to meet and blend.
But a year was gone and over since their names were asked in church,
And whispers went round the neighbours so ready one's fame to smirch.
The wedding was fixed and settled, the wedding that should have been—
But it happened a twelvemonth later—the first one was stopped, I mean.

Yes, stopped, as it were, at the altar, stopped on the very morn,
And the bride had to hide her secret, and swallow the whispered scorn.
She was dressed in her bridal raiment, and bonny and flushed and glad,
When he came to the house like a spectre, with a look so scared and mad

That the bridesmaids shook like aspens as he passed them in the hall.
Then he asked for the mother and Elspeth, and then came a cry and fall—
She had fainted away, poor darling. He had left it till the last,
This message of evil fortune, that came like a blighting blast.

And presently Elspeth's father came, with a stern-set face,
To gather the guests together, all who were in the place.
He said that a great misfortune had come upon Harold Grey,
And his daughter was lying speechless, and would be no bride that day.
Then the guests in their wedding favours drove fast from the scene of grief;
And I went away to St. Peter's with a message as strange as brief.
I whispered the waiting clergy, and passed to the crowded pews,
Telling her friends and kinsfolk the sad and mysterious news.

"To Dick on our silver wedding"—I was always
his old friend Dick;
We were chums when the oats were sowing and the
pulse of our youth beat quick.
We were students in Paris together, we were both
of us mad for art,
We lodged in the Latin Quarter, and for months
were never apart,
Till Harold got hit by a model, a beautiful, bold,
bad girl,
With a face that was meant for mischief and eyes
to set brains in a whirl.
She angled for Harold, the hussy, and landed him
safe ashore;
He married the jade, poor fellow, and then we were
chums no more.

His father had left him money, and Harold was well
to do,
He gave up the Latin Quarter and the old Bohemian
crew,
And taking his Mimi with him went back to his
English home,
And then, so I heard from his cousin, he went
painting again to Rome.

From time to time still I gathered some news of his wandering life—
He was worried and ill, they told me, and had work with his foreign wife.
She left him at last in a passion—left him and crossed the seas,
And his lawyers sent her monthy, the price of their client's ease.

Then Harold and I were cronies once more as in days gone by,
For he sought me out in my chambers, and told me with many a sigh
Of the bonds that had worn his heart out, and how, now that his life was free,
He had thought of our old, sweet friendship, and how happy he'd been with me;
Here we had rooms together and painted and smoked and wrote,
Contented on life's vast ocean like rudderless ships to float.
We were happy as lords and as lazy, when a message to Harold came
That the Court of Death had divorced him from the woman who bore his name.

Two years went by ere he whispered a secret he'd
kept with care—
A story all love and rapture, and the charms of a
maiden fair.
He spoke of his boyhood's error and his manhood's
bitter pain,
And the angel who'd come to bless him, the beau-
tiful Elspeth Rayne.
It was settled before he told me, and they'd fixed
the happy day—
I must see her at once; he took me and carried me
straight away
To papa and mamma and Elspeth, and I felt such an
awkward stick
When Harold, his blue eyes laughing, cried, "This
is my dear old Dick!"

He spoke of our life-long friendship, and how good
I had been to him,
Till I felt like a blushing schoolgirl and my eyes
were queer and dim;
And his Elspeth came and whispered, she feared I
should hate her *so*—
I was one of the family circle, like a friend of the
long ago.

Well, the time came round for the wedding, and the night before we met,
And we spoke of the glad to-morrow—ah, that night I shall ne'er forget!
I and Harold went home together, our path lay by Thames's tide,
And he spoke of the dead that evening, and then of to-morrow's bride.

And just by the bridge a woman passed us with lightning speed,
In a moment we guessed her errand, in a second she did the deed;
A cry on the cold black waters, then a leap from the muddy strand,
Brave Harold had plunged and seized her and had dragged her safe to land.
The people had come about us, and a hearty cheer was raised;
But *he* with a look of horror in the face of the outcast gazed,
For there, with her breast fast heaving with the signs of returning life,
Lay the woman he once had honoured with the sacred name of wife.

Her death was a well-planned fiction—she nourished
a cruel hate,
And bided her time to strike him, on the eve of a
happier fate.
She would wait till he wedded another, then prey
on his hopes and fears,
And the gold that would buy her silence would pay
for the two lost years.
But she drank, and her brain was maddened; she
had leapt in the stream to-night
When her soul was a prey to terrors and the fever
was at its height.
He bore her away and housed her, and hid her from
prying eyes,
And the limbs of the law came slowly to find they
had lost their prize.

When the shock Time's hand had softened, came
beautiful Elspeth Rayne
To kneel by the side of the woman, who moaned
with a ceaseless pain;
She prayed to the God of mercy to spare the poor
lost soul,
The time to repent her trespass and strive for the
heavenly goal.

And never a sign made Harold of the broken heart within,
For he smothered his love for Elspeth as a black and an awful sin;
But she, like a noble woman, came here as the outcast's friend,
And nursed her with me and Harold right to the very end.

One eve, as the shadows deepened, and we sat by the patient's bed,
She spoke, in her broken English, and asked us to raise her head;
She called to her spouse and Elspeth to stand in the fading light,
That her eyes might rest on their faces and be blessed with the holy sight;
Then, taking their hands, she joined them, and bade them forgive her sin,
And pray to the Lord of Heaven to pity and take her in;
"And when I am dead," she murmured, "let Elspeth be your bride";
Then she spoke no more till the morrow, when she blessed them both and died.

"To Dick on our silver wedding." They know that
I've got the gout—
They know I'd have been amongst them if the
doctors would let me out—
And down in the sweet green country, where their
happy lives have flown,
They can picture these grimy chambers, where I
grumble and growl alone.
And to-day is their silver wedding—I look at each
handsome face,
There's never a look less tender, and never a
vanished grace—
Give me that bottle, nephew—a fig for what
doctors say!—
Gout or no gout, here's a bumper to Harold and
Elspeth Grey!

A LAST LOOK.

I heard him, Joe, I heard him—
I heard the doctor say
My sight was growing weaker,
And failing day by day.
"She's going blind," he whispered;
Yes, darling, it is true;
These eyes will soon have taken
Their last long look at you.

The room is dull and misty,
And as I try to gaze
There seems to fall between us
A thick and cruel haze.
I'm going blind, my darling;
Ah! soon the day must be
When these poor eyes will open,
And vainly try to see.

Oh, take my hand, my husband,
To lead me to the light,
And let your dear face linger
The last thing in my sight—
That so I may remember,
When darkness covers all,
'Twas there I last saw, softly,
God's blessed sunshine fall.

Cheer up, my dear old sweetheart,
And brush away your tears,
The look I see to-day, love,
Will linger through the years.
For when the veil has fallen,
To hide you evermore,
I want your smile to light me
Along the gloomy shore.

I yet can see you, darling—
Some light there lingers still;
The sun is setting slowly
Behind the distant hill;
Odd fancies crowd about me
Now God has let me know
My eyes must close for ever
On all things here below.

Though twenty years have vanished,
It seems but yestere'en
Since first you wooed and won me
Among the meadows green ;
Here from our cottage window
I once could see the spot
Where grew the yellow cowslip
And blue forget-me-not.

But now a strange mist hovers,
And though I strain my eyes,
Beyond my yearning glances
The dear old meadow lies.
I want to see it, darling,
The meadow by the stream,
Where first your loving whisper
Fulfilled my girlhood's dream.

So take my hand and guide me,
And lead me to the air,—
I want to see the world, love,
That God has made so fair.
I want to see the sunset,
And look upon the sky,
And bid the sweet, green country
A loving, last good-bye!

How swift the sun is setting!
It's almost twilight now;
I hear, but cannot see, dear,
The birds upon the bough.
Is this our little garden?
I cannot pierce the gloom,
But I can smell the roses—
They're coming into bloom.

Stoop down and pluck a rosebud—
You know my fav'rite tree;
My husband's hand will give me
The last one I shall see.
Ah, Joe, do you remember
The dear old happy days—
Our love among the roses
In summer's golden blaze?

I take the rose you give me,
Its petals damp with dew;
I scent its fragrant odour,
But scarce can see its hue.
In memory of to-night, Joe,
When dead I'll keep it still;
The rose may fade and wither—
Our love, dear, never will.

Quick! Quick! my footsteps falter;
Oh, take me in again;
I cannot bear the air, Joe,
My poor eyes feel the strain.
Home, home, and bring my children,
And place them at my knee,
And let me look upon them
While yet I've time to see.

Then take them gently from me,
And let us be alone:
My last fond look, dear husband,
Must be for you alone.
You've been my dear old sweetheart
Since we were lass and lad:
I've laughed when you were merry,
And wept when you were sad.

I want to see you wearing
Your old sweet smile to-night.
I want to take it with me
To make my darkness light.
God bless you, Joe, for trying—
Yes, that's the dear old look!
I'll think of that sweet story
When God has closed the book.

Joe, fetch me down the picture
That hangs beside our bed.
Ah, love, do you remember
The day that he lay dead?
Our first-born bonny baby—
And how we sat and cried,
And thought our hearts were broken
When our sweet darling died?

I'd like to see the picture
Once more, dear, while I may,
Though in my heart it lingers
As though 'twere yesterday.
Ah! many bairns came after,
But none were like to him.
Come closer to me, darling,
The light is growing dim.

Come closer—so; and hold me,
And press your face to mine.
I'm in a land of shadows,
Where ne'er a light can shine.
But with your arm around me,
What danger need I fear?
I'll never need my eyes, Joe,
While your strong arm is near.

* * *

Now, be a brave old darling,
And promise not to fret;
I saw your face the last, dear,
And now I've no regret.
I saw your face the last, dear—
God's hand has dealt the blow;
My sight went out at sunset
A short half-hour ago.

Now you must be my eyesight,
Through all the sunless land,
And down life's hill we'll wander,
Like lovers, hand in hand.
Till God shall lift the curtain
Beyond these realms of pain;
And there, where blind eyes open,
I'll see your face again.

THE EARL'S DAUGHTER.

SHE stood beside the smiling stream that
mirrored back her face,
And seemed to say, "Oh weary one,
behold thy resting place!"
The rippling water kissed her feet, and murmured,
"Daughter, rest;
Come lie as in a mother's arms, and sleep upon my
breast."

The river sang its lullaby; her eyelids, drooping
down,
Let fall their fringed curtains o'er her eyes of hazel
brown—
The sweet brown eyes that looking back beheld the
cloud of shame,
And all her life's wild history writ out in words of
flame.

In sin those brown eyes saw the light, but sin of high degree;
The daughter of an English earl of noble blood was she.
In strange weird ways by Fate's big loom our web of fortune 's spun,
And *she* was doomed when Phryne's face my lord's allegiance won.

A player wench she had for dam, who made the stage a mart,
And reared an altar high to vice within the fane of art;
She sinned and played, and played to sin—a bold and brazen girl
Who won—and kept, so rumour says, for three whole years the earl.

And Nell, the baby, had his eyes, and he would kiss the child;
And when folks praised her pretty face, he looked at her and smiled.
But earls have worlds so wide to roam in search of noble joys,
He found fresh playthings by and by and left his early toys.

He sowed his oats and settled down, and took a noble dame,
And had a daughter born to him to bear her father's name;
The player wench was pensioned off, and Nell was pensioned too:
He washed his hands of wicked things, and started life anew.

A cheque was drawn—a good round sum—and Nell's next nurse was one
Who'd sit with her the livelong day—a viscount's eldest son;
But by and by, as Nellie grew too old to romp and play,
The mother found a growing girl was sometimes in the way.

She cowed the child and called her "brat"; her presence was a tie;
And when poor Nell was ill and weak half hoped that she would die;
The good round sum the earl had paid, "in full of every claim,"
Was long since spent, but Nell remained poor child of sin and shame.

The years passed on, and Nell was put to shift
as best she could;
The mother thought the stage might lead her child
to something good;
She stood half draped in loose burlesques, and
blushed and lost her head,
And trembled when the men came round, and burst
in tears and fled.

Then Phryne cursed the weeping Nell, and bade
her pack and go,
And in her passion hit the girl a foul and cruel
blow,
That woke the evil passions there; the slumbering
devil rose.
That night three lovers came to woo; she listened
and she chose.

* * *

To end her sinful life to-day she seeks the waters
deep,
A gnawing hunger in her heart to close her eyes and
sleep.
Too proud to cheat and rob and lie, her wings are
broken soon;
The evening shadows cross her path ere yet it
should be noon.

She stands beside the stream that laves an earl's
far reaching ground;
She hears a voice, and peers between the hedge
that runs around;
Then turns away, and cries, "O God! had such a
lot been mine,
I had not e'er been forced to sin, and break Thy
laws divine."

Within the grounds a father sat beside his daughter
fair,
And fondly pressed his lips to hers and smoothed
her glossy hair;
A world of love was in her eyes, as in her girlish
glee
She flung her arms about his neck and rested on
his knee.

* * *

That eve the river, flinging back the sunset's ruby
glow,
Bore gently on its glassy breast a sleeper to and
fro;
It left its burden near *his* grounds, and there, while
still it lay,
His daughter saw the dreadful sight, and screamed
and turned away.

He clasped her close and soothed her fears, then bade his menials go—
How dared they let a wretched corpse upset his darling so!
'Go float it down," the earl exclaimed, "and leave it in the shed;
Then bid the parish people come and fetch away their dead."

He left her living, spurned her dead; his blood was in her veins;
He sinned, and all her weary life *she* wore the felon's chains;
But in the great Recorder's Book, where Nell's black life is shown,
Against her sins a righteous Judge will put *his* name alone.



OSTLER JOE.

I STOOD at eve, as the sun went down,
by a grave where a woman lies,
Who lured men's souls to the shores of
sin with the light of her wanton eyes,
Who sang the song that the Siren sang on the
treacherous Lurley height,
Whose face was as fair as a summer day, and whose
heart was as black as night.

Yet a blossom I fain would pluck to-day from the
garden above her dust;
Not the languorous lily of soulless sin nor the blood-
red rose of lust;
But a sweet white blossom of holy love that grew
in the one green spot
In the arid desert of Phryne's life, where all was
parched and hot.

* * *

In the summer, when the meadows were aglow
with blue and red,
Joe, the ostler of the Magpie, and fair Annie Smith
were wed.
Plump was Annie, plump and pretty, with a cheek
as white as snow;
He was anything but handsome was the Magpie's
ostler, Joe.

But he won the winsome lassie. They'd a cottage
and a cow,
And her matronhood sat lightly on the village
beauty's brow.
Sped the months and came a baby—such a blue-
eyed baby boy!
Joe was working in the stables when they told him
of his joy.

He was rubbing down the horses, and he gave
them then and there
All a special feed of clover, just in honour of the
heir:
It had been his great ambition, and he told the
horses so,
That the Fates would send a baby who might bear
the name of Joe.

Little Joe the child was christened, and, like babies, grew apace;
He'd his mother's eyes of azure and his father's honest face.
Swift the happy years went over, years of blue and cloudless sky;
Love was lord of that small cottage, and the tempests passed them by.

Passed them by for years, then swiftly burst in fury o'er their home.
Down the lane by Annie's cottage chanced a gentleman to roam;
Thrice he came and saw her sitting by the window with her child,
And he nodded to the baby, and the baby laughed and smiled.

So at last it grew to know him—little Joe was nearly four;
He would call the 'pretty gemplun' as he passed the open door;
And one day he ran and caught him, and in child's play pulled him in,
And the baby Joe had prayed for brought about the mother's sin.

'Twas the same old wretched story that for ages
bards have sung:
'Twas a woman weak and wanton and a villain's
tempting tongue;
'Twas a picture deftly painted for a silly creature's
eyes
Of the Babylonian wonders and the joy that in
them lies.

Annie listened and was tempted; she was tempted
and she fell,
As the angels fell from heaven to the blackest
depths of hell;
She was promised wealth and splendour and a
life of guilty sloth,
Yellow gold for child and husband,—and the
woman left them both.

Home one eve came Joe the Ostler with a cheery
cry of 'Wife!'
Finding that which blurred for ever all the story of
his life.
She had left a silly letter,—through the cruel scrawl
he spelt;
Then he sought the lonely bed-room, joined his
horny hands and knelt.

"Now, O Lord, O God, forgive her, for she ain't to blame!" he cried;
"For I owt t'a seen her trouble, and 'a gone away and died.
Why, a wench like her—God bless her!—'twasn't likely as her'd rest
With that bonny head for ever on a ostler's ragged vest.

"It was kind o' her to bear me all this long and happy time,
So for my sake please to bless her, though You count her deed a crime;
If so be I don't pray proper, Lord, forgive me; for You see
I can talk all right to 'osses, but I'm nervous like with Thee."

Ne'er a line came to the cottage from the woman who had flown;
Joe the baby died that winter, and the man was left alone.
Ne'er a bitter word he uttered, but in silence kissed the rod,
Saving what he told his horses, saving what he told his God.

Far away in mighty London rose the woman into fame,
For her beauty won men's homage, and she prospered in her shame;
Quick from lord to lord she flitted, higher still each prize she won,
And her rivals paled beside her as the stars beside the sun.

Next she made the stage her market, and she dragged Art's temple down
To the level of a show place for the outcasts of the town.
And the kisses she had given to poor Ostler Joe for nought
With their gold and costly jewels rich and titled lovers bought.

Went the years with flying footsteps while her star was at its height;
Then the darkness came on swiftly, and the gloaming turned to night.
Shattered strength and faded beauty tore the laurels from her brow;
Of the thousands who had worshipped never one came near her now.

Broken down in health and fortune, men forgot her very name,
Till the news that she was dying woke the echoes of her fame;
And the papers in their gossip mentioned how an "actress" lay
Sick to death in humble lodgings, growing weaker every day.

One there was who read the story in a far-off country place,
And that night the dying woman woke and looked upon his face.
Once again the strong arms clasped her that had clasped her long ago,
And the weary head lay pillowed on the breast of Ostler Joe.

All the past had he forgotten, all the sorrow and the shame;
He had found her sick and lonely, and his wife he now could claim.
Since the grand folks who had known her one and all had slunk away,
He could clasp his long-lost darling, and no man would say him nay.

In his arms death found her lying, in his arms her spirit fled;
And his tears came down in torrents as he knelt beside her dead.
Never once his love had faltered through her base unhallowed life;
And the stone above her ashes bears the honoured name of wife.

* * *

That's the blossom I fain would pluck to-day from the garden above her dust;
Not the languorous lily of soulless sin nor the blood-red rose of lust;
But a sweet white blossom of holy love that grew in the one green spot
In the arid desert of Phryne's life, where all was parched and hot.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

HARK! It is over! The organ peals,
The Bishop has mumbled the final word
Over the chancel the sunlight steals,
Mocking the sob the bridesmaids heard.
Here, in the sight of a God above,
A Lord has taken a fair young bride;
Here they have sworn to honour and love,
And each of them knew that the other lied.

This is a market where slaves are sold;
Rare is the slave that they sell to-day.
They barter her sweet white flesh for gold
To a noble sheep who has gone astray.
For rank and jewels and vast estates
They forced his badge on her dainty hand,
Sealing her doom to the worst of fates—
Here in a church in a Christian land.

My lord the Bishop, he bowed his head,
And rolled his eyes with a mellowed grace,
As the beautiful words in the book he read,
And a sunbeam fell on his saintly face—
His lordship knew of the bridegroom's fame—
He knew of the women, the cards, and wine;
But up from the altar he sent his name
To be specially blessed by the King divine.

He gazed on the face of the high-born maid,
And saw the mark where the tears had been;
He knew that a daughter had wept and prayed,
He knew that a mother had feared a scene—
Had torn herself from the weeping girl,
Whose love was away o'er the distant sea,
And had sold her child to a titled churl
Who had just got round from a bad *d. t.*

Back from the doors with the ragged crew!
Line the passage on either side!
Hide her shame from the people's view!
Hurry her off, the trembling bride!
There isn't a man in the motley crowd
But knows of her owner's evil life;
And they tell the tale of his sins aloud,
Till the wantons pity the new-made wife.

The air is gay with the wedding chimes,
Over the town the news they tell,
That a Bishop has blessed the worst of crimes,
And now they are tolling a maiden's knell.
His lordship follows his dainty prize;
Now whip the horses, and speed away!
Look at the tears in her swollen eyes—
Pity, my lord, for your helpless prey!

* * *

Over the seas on a barbarous coast,
A soldier leads in a desperate fight
A handful of men 'gainst a swarming host,
And the battle is waged from dawn till night.
One to a hundred still they stand,
Fighting like heroes, and win at last;
And the news goes home to the distant land,
And his fame is spread with a trumpet-blast.

She hears the story a week new wed,
For his gallant deed is on every tongue;
Oft for him have her prayers been said,
Oft for him have her hands been wrung.
He was the hero she loved so long,
His was the image that filled her heart;
Ah, she had done him a grievous wrong!
Well, it was best they were leagues apart.

She thought of the soldier who fought so well,
And then of the *roue* whose rings she wore;
She hears the tales that the gossips tell
Of the evil life that he led before.
She hears the tales and she doubts them not,
For once again he has broken out;
He comes to his couch like a drunken sot,
And leaves strange letters and *cartes* about.

What does it matter one jot to her?
Let him go to the bad at his own mad pace;
No word she spoke would her lord deter;
He'd laugh with scorn in her pleading face.
She winced but once—at the season's height
A creature sat by her husband's side,
And drove the ponies in all men's sight
His friends had given the new-made bride.

Never a flush on her marble brow,
Only a curl of her faultless lip;
The world's tongue wags with the story now,
And her lord goes off on a lengthy trip.
All men pity, and some of them speak,
And sigh o'er the wrongs of the reigning belle;
The papers have paragraphs week by week,
And wider and wider the scandals swell.

Her *carte* is hung in the West-end shops,
With her name in full on the white below;
And all day long there's a big crowd stops
To look at the lady who's "all the go."
Queen is she of her set to-day,
In the realms of fashion she reigns alone;—
She should hear what the coarse-tongued rabble say,
Now the price she paid for her name is known.

And not alone do the rabble speak;
There's something Society whispers too—
It was all the talk of the Ascot week:
The scandal's delightfully fresh and new.
The lover who went to the wars is back—
Back with the fame which his sword had won;
And of more than malice the stories smack
That round on the lips of the gossips run.

Wherever is Venus, there is Mars.
Her face lights up when he comes about–
Ascot gave matter for spiteful "pars"
And Henley has put it beyond a doubt.
Her love shines out through her splendid eyes;
Love is a passion, or right or wrong:
Pity the woman who wildly tries
To stem a torrent, yet floats along.

Gaze on the photo of "Beauty" hung—
Hung in the shops for cads to buy.
Little you dream how her heart is wrung,
Little you dream how that breast can sigh.
Let us think of the Turk with a feeling heart,
Who sells his slaves in the wanton East;
Here we have mothers who hold a mart,
And "Beauty" is sold to the wealthy "Beast."



A LEGEND OF LOVE.



S it true, this dainty story?
Is it true—ah, who shall say?
In the brighter noonday glory
Morning shadows melt away.
Poets' fancies woven gaily,
Cruel fingers tear apart;
And in judgment Brain sits daily
On the children of the heart.

Is it true? O bid defiance
To the doubters' cruel eyes—
Men who take as toys of science
All the glories of the skies.
Better far the foolish savage
Who on twenty Gods will call,
Than the scholar doubts can ravage,
Till he knows no God at all.

* * *

O'er the leagues of stormy water
Came a story on the breeze;
From a cruel field of slaughter
It was borne across the seas.
'Mid the roar of mighty Babel
It was whispered far and wide;
'Twas a tearful tender fable
Of a hero who had died.

Years ago, in times called olden—
'Tis a legend, mind, I tell—
From his throne, high reared and golden,
Cast to earth, a ruler fell.
Fought by foreign foes and worsted,
Mad with grief, and mad with shame,
For his blood the people thirsted,
And heaped curses on his name.

Far away, an exile broken,
Shorn of all his pomp and pride,
Cæsar passed his race's token
To his only son; and died.
Died afar, by all unheeded
Who of yore had bent the knee;
And he sleeps the sleep he needed
In his tomb across the sea.

To that son the right descended
Still to count himself a king;
Courtiers still his steps attended,
Doubting not what time would bring;
And he kept the grand tradition
Of his proud Imperial race:
"Bide your time," was Cæsar's mission;
"You shall fill your father's place."

Yet the waves of time they bore him
Little nearer to the throne:
Blood, he said, should not restore him,
But his people's love alone.
Not for him the pathway gory,
That his hero-fathers trod;
He would keep his whole life-story
Fit for eyes of man and God.

So he grew among the strangers
Till he came to man's estate,
Then he sought afar the dangers
That beset a soldier's fate.
Why? Ah, whisper, gentle breezes,
Ye that come across the sea,
With the tender tale it pleases
Cruel Fate to send by thee!

He had loved a high-born maiden,
Youngest daughter of a Queen;
Yet his heart with grief was laden—
Shadows crept their loves between.
Fancy cast a dream-spell o'er him;
Then the ghosts of history came—
Spread his race's past before him,
While in blood they wrote his name.

Lines of upraised daggers gleaming,
Pointed ever at his heart;
Crowned at last, though in his dreaming,
He was playing Cæsar's part.
Then he clasped his queen, to save her
From the mob who sought her life;
Just one wild embrace he gave her;
And then fell the fatal knife.

Back he thrust the dream appalling,
While with ashen face he swore
He would list to duty's calling,
But would think of love no more.
Down he crushed his hope for ever,
Shunned the maiden's tender eyes;
Hearts were wrung in that endeavour—
Tears would all unbidden rise.

One short word had he but spoken,
His had been the maiden's hand;
In her eyes he read the token,
He could see the promised land.
Love that's checked is love the stronger;
Should he bid her be his mate?
God forbid that he should wrong her!
She should know a happier fate.

He was heir to pomp and splendour;
Hope might dawn for him at last;
Fiercest foes might yet surrender:
But the fatal die was cast.
Comes his dirge across the billows;
Sets his gentle star for aye.
Death his crownless head now pillows—
He has flung his life away.

Came a whisper o'er the ocean,
He had sought a soldier's death;
And to seal a life's devotion,
Gave *her* land his latest breath.
Reckless there he courted danger—
And the tale is far and wide,
How the youth, to fear a stranger,
Death had wooed and won for bride.

* * *

Is it true, this legend olden,
 Or some poet's idle dream,
Who has sought, in garments golden,
 Thus to dress a dainty theme?
If aright they tell his story,
 All his race he soars above;
They are men who die for glory,
 'Twas a god who died for love.

FORGOTTEN—A LAST INTERVIEW.

CHARLEY, I'm glad to see you! I thought you'd forgotten me quite;
It's rarely I see an actor, and it's always a welcome sight.
And how goes the show this Christmas? You're making a name, I see;
Does anyone ever wonder and ask what's become of me?
There, don't nod your head to please me; why, it's years since I left the stage;
Five years, at the least, old fellow—I'm one of a bygone age.
And, lying here sick and weary, and worn with the ceaseless pain,
I wonder if folks remember my seasons at Drury Lane.

Whenever the Lane tried Shakespeare, I was one
of the leading men;
You saw me as Hamlet, Charley, the night that I
had my Ben.
I was reckoned a fairish actor, and the public liked
me well,
Though, maybe, they'd call me stagey, now Shake-
speare must suit the swell.
But then I had big receptions, and I wasn't afraid
to shout;
'Twas before the fine French notion of "acting
charades" came out.
I'd my name on the six-feet posters, and big in the
Drury bills;
I think of it often now, lad, and my poor old bosom
thrills.

I can see the stage and the footlights, and the house
and the crowded pit;
I can hear the shouts and the stamping that tell me
I've made a hit;
I can see the sea of faces flash white as I cross the
scene.
Ah me! but those triumphs, Charley, they were
few and too far between.

I was always weak and ailing, and I hadn't the best
of luck;
I got the fame that I worked for, but somehow it
never stuck.
There wasn't a run on Shakespeare, or the manage-
ment broke down,
And I had to take to the country, and work from
town to town.

So I couldn't have saved much money—not with a
wife to keep
And three young children, Charley—that's one of
them there asleep.
The wife she died one winter—she died of a broken
heart;
She'd to play in a play called "Troubles," and hers
was a killing part.
And I was left with the children to do the best I
could,
But I got in the bills in London, and that winter
God was good.
I made a success, and was lucky, the play ran half
a year,
So I paid up my back debts bravely—and then I
was taken queer.

One day I was on the hoardings, in letters quite two
feet high,
And the next I was lying here, lad, and they thought
that I should die ;
But I lingered and mended slowly, and here I am
lying still—
With the last of my savings vanished, and a terrible
doctor's bill.
Oh ! it's hard when the black ox bellows, and comes
with his cruel tread
To scatter our earthly treasures, and crush our
ambition dead ;
To know that the world we worked for has never a
thought to spare,
But worships a brand-new hero who reigns in the
footlights' glare.

Charley, I'm glad to see you, for there's something
I want to say,
Now I know that the Lord has called me, and my
life ebbs fast away.
It haunts me asleep and waking, and it fills me with
nameless fear ;
What will become of my darlings when I am no
longer here ?

An actor is soon forgotten—he reigns as a king awhile:
He's fêted, and cheered, and honoured, and he basks in the public's smile.
But the moment his work is over, and gone is the power to please,
He has drained the cup of pleasure and come to the bitter lees.

Then he whom the thousands greeted with a tempest of hearty cheers,
Who passed as a conquering hero 'mid the homage of crowded tiers,
May lie in his bitter anguish, and moan with the ceaseless pain,
With never a word to soothe him, and he cries for help in vain.
Oh, it's hard to be thus forgotten! to know, as the years roll by,
You are fading from all remembrance, you who had climbed so high;
It's hard, in the sad night watches, to think how you once could play,
And to know that the curtain's fallen which hides you, alas! for aye.

O for the fire that nerved me when I trod the busy scene,
In the glory of plume and helmet and my armour's silver sheen!
O for the mad wild rapture as I fought the mimic fight,
And the house rose nightly at me and yelled with a fierce delight!
I am watched by the eager thousands, and their hot flushed faces turn—
As I cry in a voice of thunder that the traitor's threat I spurn;
Then forth flies my white steel flashing, and I smite at the tyrant—so,
And he reels to the wings and staggers 'neath the weight of the ringing blow.

Hark at the people, Charley!—hark at the mighty roar!
It floats in my ears like music that shall come again no more.
Prop me a bit with the pillows—I'm faint, and my sight grows dim;
The thought of the past unnerves me, and I tremble in every limb.

I've lain here a helpless cripple, so long in this dull
back room,
That I've grown half a corpse already; this is but
a living tomb.
Oh, it's cruel to lie and ponder, as the twilight slowly
falls,
On the scene that lies out yonder and the crowd in
Drury's walls.

I can hear the soft sweet music, I can see the dear
old baize,
And I look in the morning paper through the list of
the promised plays.
Then my eyes are closed in fancy, and right through
the walls I see,
And the lamps in the Strand are lighted, and the
folks come two and three,
Till a big crowd slowly gathers and stretches across
the street;
Then the pit door opens sharply, and I hear the
tramping feet;
And the quiet pro's pass onward to the stage-door
up the court—
Ah! I feel like a dying schoolboy, who watches his
comrades' sport.

I've done with the stage for ever, but I'll love it till
I die.
Charley, one word, old fellow, before we say good-
bye.
It's time for you to be going; let me look at your
face once more;
You'll be on the boards directly, and you'll hear the
welcome roar.
I've a secret, lad, to tell you—I've kept it up till
now—
But I know whose hand is laying the chills on my
aching brow;
I smother my pride to ask it; but, Charley, when
I am dead,
Don't let me think my children may know the want
of bread.

My poor little hoard of savings has melted long
ago—
'Twas a secret I meant, God willing, the world
should never know.
I've schemed and I've planned and worried, and
parted with all we had,
And kept the poor home together with the help of
my eldest lad.

When I'm gone you may tell my story: how, keeping the wolf at bay,
In torture of soul and body, the poor old actor lay,
Forgotten by all his fellows. But, let it go far and wide,
'Twas the thought of his starving children that conquered the father's pride.



MISCELLANEOUS.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE LIGHTS OF LONDON TOWN.*

THE way was long and weary,
But gallantly they strode,
A country lad and lassie,
Along the heavy road.
The night was dark and stormy,
But blithe of heart were they,
For shining in the distance
The Lights of London lay.
O gleaming lamps of London that gem the City's crown,
What fortunes lie within you, O Lights of London Town.

* Set to music by Louis Diehl, and published by Boosey and Co., 242, Regent-street, W.

The years passed on and found them
Within the mighty fold,
The years had brought them trouble,
But brought them little gold.
Oft from their garret window,
On long still summer nights,
They'd seek the far-off country
Beyond the London lights.
O mocking lamps of London, what weary eyes look down,
And mourn the day they saw you, O Lights of London Town.

With faces worn and weary,
That told of sorrow's load,
One day a man and woman
Crept down a country road.
They sought their native village,
Heart-broken from the fray ;
Yet shining still behind them,
The Lights of London lay.
O cruel lamps of London, if tears your light could drown,
Your victims' eyes would weep them, O Lights of London Town.

SENSATIONAL SCIENCE.



HE rage for knowledge grows apace,
A pace that quite terrific is;
To-day the whole of Britain's race
Devoutly scientific is.

No more in cloisters science roams,
No tyrant gives a knock to it;
It writes, we rush to buy its tomes;
It lectures, and we flock to it.

For science now our girls and boys
Their love for thee recant, O mime!
The clown is shunned for higher joys,
And Tyndall beats the pantomime.

The "Institution" lectures draw
The babes who once loved merriment;
And tiny tots can lisp the law
That governs each experiment.

Our laughing girls give up their play,
All bitten by the mania
To hear what Huxley has to say
On Patagonian crania.

Ethnology bids croquet stand,
And cast aside lawn tennis is
For Evolution's doctrines and
The charms of Biogenesis.

On Life and Death and Hell (O fie!)
These famous men enlighten us;
They wing their flight so very high
They positively frighten us.

On all our cherished creeds they fall,
Without the least apology,
And hurl the bowl that scatters all
The ninepins of theology.

We sit enthralled when Huxley shows,
Or writes about, in articles,
The stream of life that ebbs and flows
In protoplasmic particles.

And when the microscope reveals
What lies in specks gelatinous,
The timid maiden almost squeals,
"O dear, to think we've *that* in us!"

Then Darwin says that our papas—
(Is't science this or lunacy?)—
Ran up the trees with our mammas
In man's old world, Baboonacy.

Our girls, from views so wild as these,
Half angry and half funky rise;
To say they come from chimpanzees
Does make the darlings' monkey rise.

"Art-culture" leads a giddy throng,
Who ape the strict æsthetical,
And think the "pretty" must be wrong,
The "tidy" quite heretical.

The critic's jargon, quickly caught,
Is lisped by girls at boarding-school!
And Art's at present largely taught
According to the "hoarding-school."

Grim Ruskin frowns and hurls his darts,
And lifts his voice to lecture all
On painting, sculpture, and the arts,
And topics architectural.

In Ruskin's page all dip awhile,
For quaint and clever Ruskin is;
As "pitching in" pervades his style,
The world of readers thus kin is.

Like Tyndall, Huxley, Darwin, he
Must now and then his quarrels have;
But all of them the great B.P.
Encrowned with lavish laurels have.

Explain, O Truth, why men like these
Are heroes educational!
Miss Truth replies, "Why, if you please,
Because they're so sensational!"

THE BUTTERCUP'S EXPLANATION.

I HAPPENED last week by the merest of chances
To wander at noon near a sweet little spot,
When the May sun was casting its warmest of glances
And making the baa-lambs believe it was hot.
It's true that the joke lasted only a moment,
For just as a buttercup lifted its head
To see what its sudden sensation of glow meant,
Young Phœbus grew frightened and hastily fled.

I fancied I noticed that buttercup's petals
Assume an undoubted expression of scorn,
For even a buttercup's feelings it nettles
To find that our springtide of sunshine is shorn.
In mood philosophic, the why and the wherefore
Of all that attracts my attention I seek;
Its mind on the state of the weather I therefore
Invited that floweret freely to speak.

"You ask me," it answered, "my private conclusion
Respecting these obstinate fits of the sun;
Now I think, though it may be an empty delusion,
That science the worst of the mischief has done.
You know there's a theory—Huxley's and Tyndall's—
That the whole of mankind and the animate world
Take their life from the heat which his majesty kindles,
And, losing it, all would to chaos be hurled?

"I guess the sun's heard that his sway is despotic,
The words of the savants have come to his ears,
No longer earth's lover with vigour quixotic,
Now seldom among us his lordship appears.
Like the swell who presides at a charity dinner,
He fancies his 'form' is so awfully good;
And feels with the pride of a privileged sinner
He's much too important to come when he should."

LITTLE JIM.



UR little Jim
Was such a limb
His mother scarce could manage him.
His eyes were blue,
And looked you through,
And seemed to say,
"I'll have my way!"
His age was six,
His saucy tricks
But made you smile,
Though all the while
You said, "You limb,
You wicked Jim,
Be quiet, do!"

Poor little Jim!
Our eyes are dim
When soft and low we speak of him.
No clatt'ring shoe
Goes running through
The silent room,
Now wrapped in gloom.
So still he lies,
With fast-shut eyes,
No need to say,
Alas! to-day,
"You little limb,
You baby Jim,
Be quiet, do!"

A COMMON OCCURRENCE.

I HAD a dream the other night—
A vision I should rather say—
In which I climbed to fortune's height
In quite a sudden sort of way.
When half asleep and half awake
A flash of inspiration came,
And showed me something that would make
A boundless wealth and lasting fame.

I think I hit upon a plan
Of doing something long decreed
A feat impossible to man,
Of which he stood in special need.
It might have been to make a gas
At twopence per the thousand feet,
Or farthing dinners for the mass
To take the place of butchers' meat.

I know that in my semi-dream
I saw the thing as clear as noon,
With not a hitch in all the scheme,
Which gave the world a priceless boon.
'Twas no inventor's fancy task,
But simple as the A B C;
Yet now I beat my brow and ask,
What could that splendid notion be?

For days and days I've taxed my brain
To bring that blessed vision back,
But all my efforts are in vain,
I can't get Fancy on the track.
A chance of fortune, so they say,
Comes once to all men here below,
Mine caught me napping, passed away,
And what it was I ne'er shall know.

THE POLICEMAN'S TALE.

AFTER CHAUCER—500 YEARS.

A CONSTABEL one nighte that it didde rayne
Both cattes and dogges, and pytchforkes too, was fayne
Hymsel within a taverne to betake,
His flesch to drie, and eke hys thyrste to slake.
And there ful many a pleasaunt carle he founde
In barr-parloure a grogge-bowle seaten rounde,
Y-like hymsel who'd soughten herbergage
Ontil ye storme its furie sholde assuage.
Ye canne went rounde and pypes of claye were litte,
And everichone y-didde what seemed hym fytte,
'Til whan no wight colde hearen hymsel speke.
Up gat ye Hoste, a burgess bigge in cheke,
And this he sayde unto them plat and playne:
"An' here ye wolden bide ontil ye rayne

Hath stayed itsel, in sooth, then baren ye
With les dispute and more tranquillitie.
To passe ye time I trowe it wolde be wel,
An everichone in tourne a tayle sholde tel,
And thilkë wight who in hys taske do fayle
Shal paye his comperes rounde in moisty ayle."
Then sotte he doune; the guestës cried "Y-wis,"
And castë lottes who firste sholde doen this.
Ye Constabel ye longest wispë drewe,
And thus beganne withouten more ado.

YE CONSTABEL HIS TAYLE.

Whilom whan newë to ye force I came
And modest was nor uppe to everich game,
Nor wot for naught that I might laye a hande
On any common carle in Englelande.
It fell one nighte that it was drear and wette
(My beate was in ye pleasaunt Haimaurkette),
A manne I spied y-fallen on ye grounde,
And straighte didde kikke hym for to bring hym rounde;
And whan maugré my kikkes no signe he mayd,
Hym through ye streete I by hys heeles conveyed,
And to the Stacioun did hym dragge, the where
Ye Sergeaunt straight y-clapt hym in a chayre;

But as he wolde ne speke, ne ope hys eyes,
Though with our beltës we hym did chasteyse,
Eftsoons, we felled him; he of drinke did smelle,
So hym we casten in ye tosspottes celle.

Now whan that morne was come much was I payned
To finde this caitiffe on hys bakke remayned.
In vaine by bearde I swinked hym to and fro;
He wolde ne smyle, ne answour "aye" ne "noe,"
But stille he laye with eyen fast y-shet,
And on hys legges I colde him no way get.
I hayled a cabbe and stecked hym on ye seate,
Than with hym drove to Courte of Bowës-streete;
Agen ye dokke I stecked hym bolte uprite,
And to ye Judge hys deedës did recyte.
How that I founde ye gaillard on ye grounde,
And that sin' then hys tongue he hed not founde.
"Thy name?" freined Judge, and set on hym hys eye.
And still ye carle vouchsafëd no replye.
"He sickerley shammes ille," ye Judge did shoute;
"Let leeche be highte, we'll see this mattere outte."
Ye leeche he came, and criëd with amayze
"Marry! thys carle's been deadë all two dayes."

Hyr ceased ye Constabel and looked aboute,
Espèring to have hearde a merrie shoute;

But everich fayce was blakke, and one manne rose
And shoke hys fiste beneath ye peeler's nose,
And cryed that it was shame in Christen lande
Such fools should holde mennes livës in their hande.
"Graunt-mercy for yr tayle, gode Sir," quod he,
"It showth what doltes are in auctoritie."
And than he tolde how he hymsel hadde sene
A manne nigh deade tway constabels betwene,
Who shoke hym wel and called hym dronken loon,
And kikkëd hym with iron-tippëd shoon.
By this ye rayne had ceased, which, whan they knew,
Ye guestës rose and went outte two by two.
Ye Constabel was called to stoppe a fraye,
So drank his ayle and wente another waye.

AN ASPIRATION.

I WOULD I might have had the luck
To live some million years ago,
Ere man emerging from the ruck
Contrived so many things to know;
Ere sense of sin could mar his rest,
And laws had not invented crimes.
No qualms of conscience life oppprest
Say those who write of early times.

The world was once a baking ball
Of dirt and other nasty things,
And then there were no men at all,
So clever Mr. Tyndall sings.
I'll follow back creation's scale,
And wish I had existed then,
A shapeless something with a tail,
A shallow mudbank for my den.

These monsters lived a thousand years
In one delightful semi-doze,
Untouched by either hopes or fears
Amid formation's thousand throes.
They wallowed on in lazy mood
With indolent, half-open eye,
And jaws agape to catch the food
The sluggish stream brought floating by.

The cake got harder, and the earth
With each new layer fitter grew
To give a noble creature birth
Till men at last its forest knew.
They tilled the long untortured soil,
And warred against the prowling beasts,
Till life became one long turmoil
Of work and sport and bloody feasts.

As onward still the ages rolled
Came Culture with its blasting breath,
To bid the ills of life unfold
And give new pangs and fears to death.
With weakened muscles, quickened nerves,
With aching limbs and heated brain,
Our race to-day from nature swerves,
And life becomes an overstrain.

And when the strife was at its height,
My span of wild unrest began,
Fate pounced upon this luckless wight
And set him here a modern man.
A worried, bustled, nervous thing,
A victim of the age of steam ;
With tearful eyes and hands that wring,
Of pre-historic times I dream.

Kind Fortune come, my woes assuage,
Bend down and mark a modern's moan,
And bear me through the golden age,
Through times of Iron, Bronze, and Stone !
Back, back before the men with tails,
A million years before the Flood,
To where the search of science fails,
And leave me happy in the mud.



IN THE HALL.

COME in New Year and wipe your feet,
And shake the snow that's clinging,
I'm glad the little man to meet
For whom the bells are ringing.
You bow your head, and smirk and smile,
And squeeze my hand the tighter;
Your honest eyes look free from guile—
You could not be politer.

I know the words your lips would form,
I've heard the greeting often—
"I come as sunshine after storm,
Your recent blows to soften."
Bah! foolish boy, you'll learn to strike,
Or e'er your boyhood mellows;
The years, alas! are all alike—
A band of wicked fellows.

UNDERTONES.

BY A LUNATIC LAUREATE.

THERE'S a feeling that comes with the daze of joy
And goes with the knights of grief—
That stands on the top of a baby buoy,
And floats with an anchor chief.
It rides on the back of a noted Bill,
And fights where your collars fray;
It whispers in accents loud and shrill—
To-morrow succeeds to-day.

We con the lessons of life betimes
In the leaves of an open glade;
The frost on the window writes its rimes,
We live and we learn be trayed.
The coals we heat and the apes we were
Are gone where the Russians sleigh.
The moral is blown on the well-known air—
To-morrow succeeds to-day.

In the bustle and jam of the daily strife
What matters if men preserve
The bosom of hope from the butcher's knife,
And its train from the pointsman curve?
Remember the fate of the ready maid
Who went where the preachers prey
Take matter for thought from a new decayed—
To-morrow succeeds to-day.



MY ARCTIC TOUR.

I HAVE not the least ambition—this is ex
planation merely—
For a winter in the regions that are
handy to the Pole,
Yet I imitate the travels of the heroes that have
nearly,
'Mid such horrible adventures, won the tantalising
goal.

I have followed Captain Parry to the islands that
he christened,
Where his vessel lay imprisoned all the weary winter
through ;
I have been with Ross and Beechey where the frozen
ocean glistened,
Where no animal would linger and no vegetation
grew.

I have watched the starving sailors of the Erebus and Terror,
And my well-pomatumed tresses have uplifted at the roots
When I saw the gallant fellows fall, alas! into the error,
That a stay for empty stomachs was a rotten pair of boots.

I have sailed with Kane, M'Clintock, Osborne, Kennedy, and others,
And I've trodden the Polaris with the doughty Captain Hall,
I have rivalled all the actions of the band of Polar brothers,
I have been with Nares to Disco,—but in fancy—that is all.

When the twilight shadows deepen and my daily work is over,
Home I hasten to the suburbs where my habitation lies;
There I don the proper garment for a Pole-exploring rover,
I have learned its cut and texture in the "Travels" that I prize.

Next, I hoist the British ensign on the sofa (that's
my vessel),
Strew the floor with bits of paper as a substitute
for snow,
Sail for Disco (that's the table), where I ask if
sister Bess 'll,
For a small consideration, be my faithful
Eskimo.

When by dint of much exertion with the poker and
the shovel,
We have brought our gallant vessel right across the
parlour floor,
We have reached our Winter quarters, neither
money, strength, nor love 'll
Cleave a passage through the iceberg represented
by the door.

Hence we sledge upon the teatray o'er the ice-
encumbered ocean,
But our latitude's uncertain and our longitude is
vague,
And we rub each other's noses just to keep alive
the notion
That we suffer from the nippings which the Arctic
heroes plague.

In some four-and-twenty journeys, we've discovered all the stations
Where adventurers before us passed so many weary days,
And in turn we gave the honour of our winter occupations—
Behring Strait and Melville Island, Great Fish River and the Bays.

As for climate—well, it needed very little to instil a
Perfect sense of frigid horrors, since it's easy on the whole
For a man who spends the winter *in a new suburban villa,*
To imagine that he's braving all the rigours of the Pole.

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

SOMEWHERE or other in History's page
I've read that when poets were all the rage,—
(Oh, History, thou detractor!)—
They'd only to scribble a puff in verse,
To make them free of the house and purse
Of a titled benefactor.

What halcyon days they must have been,
When lords were ready to step between
The bard and slow starvation;
When a poet had only to praise a peer,
To earn a couple of "thou" a year
And a Government situation.

The bard may struggle and fight to-day
And charm the town with his tuneful lay
No hand is stretched to aid him;
He sells his song to the trading crew,
Who hand him a paltry pound or two
And think they've overpaid him.

Yet now, my brothers, our pens are free,
We flatter no ninny of high degree,
Because his favours pay so.
No titled patron's help we crave,
And if we think that a nob's a knave,
We've every right to say so.

Let Fortune's wheel bring ceaseless blanks,
Let Destiny play us her wildest pranks,
And Misery come to try us;
We're better by far than the bards of old—
By many a man we may be sold,
But nobody's wealth can buy us.

THE DRINKER'S DIRGE

THERE'S death in the teapot, there's death in the jug;
Try a drain of cold water, death lurks in the mug.
No drink unfermented from danger is free,
There are death and disease in Milk, Water, and Tea.

From the lead that in "waters" is lurking I shrink—
Oh, tell me, good doctors, what, what can I drink?
From the worship of Bacchus a convert I'd be,
Yet you bid me beware of Milk, Water, and Tea.

How a total abstainer's to live isn't clear,
For his conscience forbids him Wine, Spirits, and Beer:
And Science commands as from death he should flee
From those poisonous liquids, Milk, Water, and Tea.

In trying from all things our lips to debar,
Hasn't Science just galloped his hobby too far?
Let the nervous go thirsting, they sha'n't frighten me
With this nonsense concerning Milk, Water, and Tea.

THE ALDERMAN'S RETROSPECT.

IN vain the board with silver groans
And fumes of turtle rise,
He only heaves a sigh and moans
As each new dish he tries;
For Indigestion mounts her seat
And Appetite departs:
Ah! happy days when he could eat
A shilling's-worth of tarts.

Go hide the capon from his sight,
Remove that *ris de veau*,
For every taste he takes to-night
Increases gastric woe.
Now back o'er many a distant day
His wand'ring fancies run;
A lanky lad he puts away
Six penn'orth underdone.

Lo! o'er his thin-stemmed goblet's brim
The sparkling nectar creams.
Its lips are left unkissed by him—
He bows his head and dreams.
Once more at night, a hungry boy,
He leaves his master's shop,
And sups upon a saveloy
Washed down with ginger pop.

A friendly nudge prevents the snore
That rises to his nose;
He picks his napkin from the floor,
And shifts his gouty toes.
Yet still his thoughts will backward flee,
And, racked by many a pain,
He'd give his hard-won wealth to be
That hungry boy again.



THE JOKE.

I HAD a joke—a little joke,
I told it humbly far and near,
No laugh the solemn stillness broke,
But people gazed with eyes severe,
And seem'd to think I should be hit
For thinking such a thing was wit.

I asked some critics to my room,
And gave it over Moët's best.
There fell on all a sudden gloom,
And low I hid my fallen crest.
"Don't make such sorry jokes," they said,
"But cut another quart instead."

I took my joke and wrapped it up,
And spun it out a yard or two,
Then sought a well-known place to sup,
Where lots of clever men I knew.
Then sitting down I cried forthwith,
"Who knows this joke of Sydney Smith?"

They clustered round me while I told
 My little joke as Sydney's child;
With frantic mirth about they rolled
 And e'en the sleepy waiters smiled.
What, reader, could the reason be?
They laughed at him and sneered at me!

I fancy, if you think it out,
 You'll find the men who hear a jest
Are often harassed by a doubt
 If mirth or scorn would look the best.
By few the jokes are understood,
But Sydney Smith's!—they *must* be good.

HARMONIOUS NUMBERS.

A SOUVENIR.

JUST pass your pouch this way, old fellow,
We've only time for twenty whiffs,
For through the sunlight mild and mellow
I see the chalk of Dover cliffs.
Ere daylight be with darkness blended
Our joyous journey will be done,
A pleasant page of life's book ended
For Fifty-seven and Sixty-one.

But yester eve and we were sipping
A *mazagrin* beneath the trees,
Parisian loungers past us tripping,
And all was there the eye to please.
Till late we sat, 'twas past eleven
When home we went with jest and pun,
And sought our rooms—I Fifty-seven,
And you, old fellow, Sixty-one.

But yesterday and we were driving
In Boulogne's wood so fresh and green,
Where light and shade were gently striving
Which best could paint the sylvan scene.
From Notre Dame, 'twixt earth and heaven,
We gazed on Paris bathed in sun,
Then arm-in-arm with Fifty-seven
To dine went *ami* Sixty-one.

My pipe's gone out! Hulloa, here's Dover!
Pick up your traps, old boy, we're in!
Our holiday, alas! is over;
Now hey! for London's dirt and din.
Some grief all earthly joys must leaven,
We part to-night, our course is run.
You won't forget old Fifty-seven—
Good-bye. God bless you, Sixty-one!

MY SUMMER RETREAT.

I'M off away from London, please, to build a little place
Where I can have some air to breathe and lots of open space;
I want to find a mountain top that isn't over bleak,
Without a hilly road to it, because my legs are weak.

I do not want a neighbourhood beset with country clowns,
But just a neighbour here and there who knows the way of towns.
They must not come and call on me, for callers are a bore,
But I shall go and visit them say twice a week or more.

I want the country round about to be the sort of thing
Of which the chaps who write for books perpetually sing—
Renowned throughout the British Isles as just the place to see;
But all the country round about I want reserved to me.

I want the strict simplicity of rural life to reign
O'er wooded height and shady dell and daisy-dotted plain;
But there must be a station close and frequent trains must start
To run me at a modest fare to almost every part.

No echo of the city life must find its way to mar,
I want no village public-house with yokels at the bar;
But just a dainty restaurant where haply I may dine,
And find a perfect French cuisine and get the best of wine.

REGRET.

I DO not mourn, sweet wife of mine,
Because those ruby lips of thine—
That marble brow—
Were kissed by one who might have been,
Had I not chanced to step between,
Thy husband now.

I do not grieve because thy heart,
Ere Cupid touched it with *my* dart,
For him would beat:
Nor that the hand which owns my ring
Once wore his gift, a "Mizpah" thing.
It was but meet.

I sigh not that his arms were placed
Some score of times around your waist,
So sweet and slim.
Ah no, my love! the woe you see
Is mine because you wedded me
Instead of him.

A RONDEL.

CHASING dead leaves along the thick strewn way,
Madly we hurry for the rough wind's prey.
Caught by the colours which false Fancy weaves,
Our godlike youth in aimless sports we slay.
Fair is the outset; 'tis the goal that grieves,
Chasing dead leaves.

Chasing dead leaves! Oh, wife with care-dulled eyes,
Far back our start upon the journey lies.
Where is Hope's harvest, all the golden sheaves?
Where of linked lives is now the promised prize?
Spring noons are past, we come to Autumn eves,
Chasing dead leaves.

Chasing dead leaves! shall Fame not turn to one
Gleaming so brightly in the morning sun?
Who dons a verdure that fond youth deceives
And hides the canker till the race is run:
Then mocks the clutch of him whose bosom heaves,
Chasing dead leaves.

A TRUE STORY.

IT happened that an Eastern King,
Whose name and land I need not mention,
Came over here to try and bring
His troubles to our folks' attention.
Our gracious sovereign heard his tale,
Our leading statesmen all received him,
And though his story turned them pale,
They heard it through and quite believed him.

He told them how his subjects were
Composed of races vile and vicious;
He laid their awful secrets bare,
And proved the moment most propitious
For us to send our teachers out
(With such a wish what State could quarrel?)
To put their wicked ways to rout
And inculcate the strictly moral.

Now while the chosen men prepare
To start upon their noble mission,
The monarch has a month to spare
In which to study our position.
He learns our language, sees our sights.
And cuts the usual tourist capers,
Sees London life in all its lights,
And takes to read the daily papers.

Or rather—let me be correct—
He only read a single journal.
Its leaders caused him to reflect;
The "cases" gave him pangs internal
He read of kickings, bitings, blows,
Of murders, fights, and frauds, and arsons;
Of swindlers charged in lengthy rows,
Including doctors, nobs, and parsons.

He read the sheet with horrors fraught,
His eyes were fixed in wildest terror,
His Christian friends at once he sought
And begged their pardon for his error.
"I see," he said, "'twere wrong to take
Your teachers from their present labours,
However much their hearts may ache
For wickedness among their neighbours.

"My subjects are, I grieve to state,
By much removed from virtue's standard.
It has distressed me, too, of late
To find they all to crime have pandered.
But having seen your stock of vice,
Of sin, and shame, and degradation,
I feel my folks are clean and nice;
Compared with you—a spotless nation."



THE HUMAN AUCTION.

HO! here are lives by the score to sell.
Up to the platform, gents, and bid;
Make me an offer, they'll pay you well—
All of 'em ripe for the coffin lid.
Here is a woman pinched and pale,
Plying her needle for daily bread;
Give me a shirt for her—more on sale,
Dying! gentlemen—dying!—dead!

A family, six in number, here,
Fresh from a cellar in Somers' Town;
Mother her sixth confinement near,
Father and brats with fever down.
'Twas Pestilence spoke then, was it not?
"An open sewer," I think he said;
Well, his offer shall buy the lot,
Dying! gentlemen—dying!—dead!

Now, good customers, here's a chance:
A thousand men in the prime of life,
Wielders of musket, sword, and lance,
Armed and drilled for the deadly strife.
General Warfare lifts his hand—
"A bullet for each," cries the gent in red.
No offer but his,—fast flows the sand,
Dying! gentlemen—dying!—dead!

A body of toilers worn and weak,
Clerks and curates and writing men—
Look at the flush on each sunken cheek,
Mark the fingers that grasp the pen!
Come, good gentlemen, can't we deal?
Has Drudgery's eye for bargains fled?
He offers, at last, the price of a meal—
Dying! gentlemen—dying!—dead!



A LEGEND.

BY A LUNATIC LAUREATE.

THEY came to me, a merry troop of aged men and dames,
And bade me brighten up a bit and watch their little games.
I had my big umbrella up and stood beneath a tree,
And so I said, "It's much too wet to lark about and spree."
The skies above were black as ink, the rain was pouring down,
And boats would be the only means to reach the distant town.
'Twas in the height of summer time—in fact, an August day,
Yet I was damp and had no heart to slush about and play.

So, when they saw that I was sad, those aged people went
And brought me out a macintosh, goloshes, and a tent,
And sat them down on stools and things and told me little tales
Of how in August years ago there were no awful gales;
Of how the summer days were warm and folks could play about,
And never dread the hurricane, the storm, and waterspout;
How people romped in new-mown hay and had no end of fun,
And no one's eyes expressed surprise to see a noonday sun.

And when they saw the wonderment expressed upon my face,
They told me how the country once was quite a lovely place;
Where one could sit upon the grass and gather wholesome fruits,
And walk about the verdant fields in patent leather boots.

How people then who went away a fortnight out of
town
Came back with freckles on the nose and faces
ruddy brown,
And how the summer sun shone out through all the
summer time,
And rain and cold were looked upon as strangers to
the clime.

I stood it for a little while, and then I rose and
said:
"I wonder if the Devil put this nonsense in your
head?
I know I am a lunatic, but, hang it all, I say,
You story-telling aged folks, pack up and go away!
In summer we expect the gale, the tempest and the
storm,
And only fools would dare to say it once was fine
and warm.
Be off before yon summer cloud that blackens all
the skies
In indignation drenches you for telling me such
lies!"

THE ENGLISHMAN.

FROM infancy, which crows and crawls,
To years mature, which sigh and run,
He lives where rain eternal falls
And seldom comes a gleam of sun.
Above his head are blackened clouds,
Below a slush that never dries,
While chill and drenching moisture shrouds
The dismal land of leaden skies.

What wonder if his features bear
The reflex of his sunless clime:
A settled look of dull despair
Set deeply by the hand of Time!
What wonder if the ceaseless drip
Of raindrops from the soaking eaves
Takes hold of him with rolling grip,
And just a mildewed mortal leaves!

He cannot dance or sing or laugh
 Like children of the brighter South;
To keep his soul warm he must quaff
 A liquid fire that stings the mouth,
That thaws the heart and melts the brain,
 That sets a Devil in his eyes,—
So Demon Drink and Demon Rain
 Rule all the land of leaden skies.



THE HAUSFRAUENVEREIN.

WITHIN that most malod'rous city,
Whence Papal bishops have to flee!
Where folks are rather wise than witty,
And yet for ever on the Spree,—
The housewives lately have decided
In one strong body to combine,
To deal with questions many-sided,
And form a Hausfrauenverein.

When tradesmen give short weight and measure,
When doctors' charges get too high,
When fashion interferes with pleasure
And single men from wedlock fly—
These fair ones quickly hold a sitting,
And straight determine on the line
Of warfare which is most befitting
The Berlin Hausfrauenverein.

They fix the price of beef and mutton,
They frame the laws of ball and rout,
Discuss the claims of hook or button,
And trot their whims and crotchets out.
How much by ladies may be swallowed
Of Wiener Bier, or Rhenish wine,
The rule is made, and strictly followed
By all the Hausfrauenverein.

The best attention by them paid is
To all the laws their lords propose
Which bear at all upon the ladies;
They aid their friends and fight their foes.
Now here's a plan, dear Woman's Righters,—
Why not like Berlin dames combine?
Leave Westminster to fiercer fighters,
And form a Hausfrauenverein.



LITTLE WORRIES.

THOUGH many ills may hamper life
When Fortune turns capricious,
The great but nerve us for the strife,
The small ones make us vicious.
Fierce griefs are soon outstripped by one
Who through existence scurries;
It's harder far a race to run
With nimble "little worries."

A button bids your shirt good-bye
When late for dinner dressing,
You have a kite you cannot fly,
And creditors are pressing.
You run to catch—and lose—a train
(That fatalest of hurries),
Your newest hat encounters rain—
Life's full of "little worries."

From day to day some silly things
 Upset you altogether;
There's nought so soon convulsion brings
 As tickling with a feather.
'Gainst minor evils let him pray
 Who fortune's favour curries,—
For one that big misfortunes slay
 Ten die of "little worries."

YE BARDES DESYRE.

AN I of formes to tak my choyce
Were at this momente free,
I'd be ye birde whose tuneful voyce
I heere on yonder tree.
He onlye singes whan he's inclynde;
Hys constitucion's sounde;
Ande he has ne ye rente to fynde
Whan Quartere Daye commes rounde.

From twigge to twigge he hoppes aboute,
No woes his harte oppress,
And whan at morne he turneth oute
He has not gotte to dress.
'Tis true hys songe he has to synge
Withoute a syngers fee,
But that's about ye onlye thynge
In which oure lottes agree.

ON A RECENT LITERARY FEED.

"WHAT, eat a newspaper!" quoth Tim.
"Pray did the meal agree with him;
Or did he indigestion get,
The man who thus a journal ate?
I read the papers every day,
And ne'er can swallow *half* they say."

"From such a feast," Tim's friend replies,
"How could dyspeptic pains arise?
The Press would scarce eschew its rule
To spite the chest of such a fool.
And papers, so the cynics sing,
Lie easily on anything."

A DOUBLE EVE-ENT.

I HEARD a matron on a Boat-race day
Applaud the pluck our British youth display—
And cry, with pride upon her beaming face,
She thought 'twas that which always won a race.
"Ah, madam," said I, "such ideas eschew,"
For Eden's river rises to my view:
There tempted, Eve, alas! turns lady thief,
And by her *pluck* she brings *our race* to grief.

THE LIFEBOAT

AND

OTHER POEMS.

To WILSON BARRETT, Esq.,

These Poems, mostly melodramatic, are dedicated, with the Author's sincere admiration for one who has done so much both as Manager and Actor for the Poetry of Melodrama.

January 1st, 1883.

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THE LIFEBOAT

AND

OTHER POEMS.

THE LIFEBOAT.

BEEN out in the lifeboat often? Ay, ay, sir, oft enough.
When it's rougher than this? Lor' bless you! this ain't what *we* calls rough!
It's when there's a gale a-blowin', and the waves run in and break
On the shore with a roar like thunder and the white cliffs seem to shake;

When the sea is a hell of waters, and the bravest holds his breath
As he hears the cry for the lifeboat—his summons maybe to death—
That's when we call it rough, sir; but, if we can get her afloat,
There's always enough brave fellows ready to man the boat.

You've heard of the Royal Helen, the ship as was wrecked last year?
Yon be the rock she struck on—the boat as went out be here;
The night as she struck was reckoned the worst as ever we had,
And this is a coast in winter where the weather be awful bad.
The beach here was strewed with wreckage, and to tell you the truth, sir, then
Was the only time as ever we'd a bother to get the men.
The single chaps was willin', and six on 'em volunteered,
But most on us here is married, and the wives that night was skeered.

Our women ain't chicken-hearted when it comes to
savin' lives,
But death that night looked certain—and our wives
be only wives;
Their lot ain't bright at the best, sir; but here,
when the man lies dead,
'Tain't only a husband missin', it's the children's
daily bread;
So our women began to whimper and beg o' the
chaps to stay—
I only heerd on it after, for that night I was kept
away.
I was up at my cottage, yonder, where the wife lay
nigh her end,
She'd been ailin' all the winter, and nothin' 'ud
make her mend.

The doctor had given her up, sir, and I knelt by her
side and prayed,
With my eyes as red as a babby's, that Death's
hand might yet be stayed.
I heerd the wild wind howlin', and I looked on the
wasted form,
And thought of the awful shipwreck as had come in
the ragin' storm;

The wreck of my little homestead—the wreck of my dear old wife,
Who'd sailed with me forty years, sir, o'er the troublous waves of life,
And I looked at the eyes so sunken, as had been my harbour lights,
To tell of the sweet home haven in the wildest, darkest nights.

She knew she was sinkin' quickly—she knew as her end was nigh,
But she never spoke o' the troubles as I knew on her heart must lie,
For we'd had one great big sorrow with Jack, our only son—
He'd got into trouble in London, as lots o' the lads ha' done;
Then he'd bolted, his masters told us—he was allus what folk call wild.
From the day as I told his mother, her dear face never smiled.
We heerd no more about him, we never knew where he went,
And his mother pined and sickened for the message he never sent.

I had my work to think of; but she had her grief to nurse,
So it eat away at her heartstrings, and her health grew worse and worse.
And the night as the Royal Helen went down on yonder sands,
I sat and watched her dyin', holdin' her wasted hands.
She moved in her doze a little, then her eyes were opened wide,
And she seemed to be seekin' somethin', as she looked from side to side;
Then half to herself she whispered, "Where's Jack, to say good-bye?
It's hard not to see my darlin', and kiss him afore I die!"

I was stoopin' to kiss and soothe her, while the tears ran down my cheek,
And my lips were shaped to whisper the words I couldn't speak,
When the door of the room burst open, and my mates were there outside
With the news that the boat was launchin'. "You're wanted!" their leader cried.

"You've never refused to go, John; you'll put these cowards right.
There's a dozen of lives maybe, John, as lie in our hands to-night!"
'Twas old Ben Brown, the captain; he'd laughed at the women's doubt.
We'd always been first on the beach, sir, when the boat was goin' out.

I didn't move, but I pointed to the white face on the bed—
"I can't go, mate," I murmured; "in an hour she may be dead.
I cannot go and leave her to die in the night alone."
As I spoke Ben raised his lantern, and the light on my wife was thrown;
And I saw her eyes fixed strangely with a pleading look on me,
While a tremblin' finger pointed through the door to the ragin' sea.
Then she beckoned me near, and whispered, "Go, and God's will be done!
For every lad on that ship, John, is some poor mother's son."

Her head was full of the boy, sir—she was thinking, maybe, some day
For lack of a hand to help him his life might be cast away.
"Go, John, and the Lord watch o'er you! and spare me to see the light,
And bring you safe," she whispered, "out of the storm to-night."
Then I turned and kissed her softly, and tried to hide my tears,
And my mates outside, when they saw me, set up three hearty cheers;
But I rubbed my eyes wi' my knuckles, and turned to old Ben and said,
"I'll see her again, maybe, lad, when the sea gives up its dead."

We launched the boat in the tempest, though death was the goal in view,
And never a one but doubted if the craft could live it through;
But our boat she stood it bravely, and, weary and wet and weak,
We drew in hail of the vessel we had dared so much to seek.

But just as we come upon her she gave a fearful roll,
And went down in the seethin' whirlpool with every livin' soul!
We rowed for the spot, and shouted, for all around was dark—
But only the wild wind answered the cries from our plungin' bark.

I was strainin' my eyes and watchin', when I thought I heard a cry,
And I saw past our bows a somethin' on the crest of a wave dashed by;
I stretched out my hand to seize it. I dragged it aboard, and then
I stumbled, and struck my forrud, and fell like a log on Ben.
I remember a hum of voices, and then I knowed no more
Till I came to my senses here, sir—here, in my home ashore.
My forrud was tightly bandaged, and I lay on my little bed—
I'd slipped, so they told me arter, and a rulluck had struck my head.

Then my mates came in and whispered; they'd heard I was comin' round.
At first I could scarcely hear 'em, it seemed like a buzzin' sound;
But as soon as my head got clearer, and accustomed to hear 'em speak,
I knew as I'd lain like that, sir, for many a long, long week.
I guessed what the lads was hidin', for their poor old shipmate's sake.
I could see by their puzzled faces they'd got some news to break;
So I lifts my head from the pillow, and I says to old Ben, "Look here!
I'm able to bear it now, lad—tell me, and never fear."

Not one on 'em ever answered, but presently Ben goes out,
And the others slinks away like, and I says, "What's this about?
Why can't they tell me plainly as the poor old wife is dead?"
Then I fell again on the pillows, and I hid my achin' head;

I lay like that for a minute, till I heard a voice cry
"John!"
And I thought it must be a vision as my weak eyes
gazed upon;
For there by the bedside, standin' up and well was
my wife.
And who do ye think was with her? Why, Jack,
as large as life.

It was him as I'd saved from drownin' the night as
the lifeboat went
To the wreck of the Royal Helen; 'twas that as the
vision meant.
They'd brought us ashore together, he'd knelt by his
mother's bed,
And the sudden joy had raised her like a miracle
from the dead;
And mother and son together had nursed me back
to life,
And my old eyes woke from darkness to look on my
son and wife.
Jack? He's our right hand now, sir; 'twas Provi-
dence pulled him through—
He's allus the first aboard her when the lifeboat
wants a crew.

THE MAGIC WAND.

A SCHOOL BOARD OFFICER'S STORY.

HORRIBLE dens, sir, aren't they?
This is one of my daily rounds
It's here, in these awful places,
That child-life most abounds.
We ferret from roof to basement
In search of our tiny prey;
We're down on their homes directly
If they happen to stop away.

Knock at the door! Pooh, nonsense!
They wouldn't know what it meant.
Come in and look about you;
They'll think you're a School Board gent.
Did you ever see such hovels?
Dirty, and damp, and small.
Look at the rotten flooring,
Look at the filthy wall.

That's lucky—the place is empty,
The whole of the family's out.
This is one of my fav'rite cases:
Just give a glance about.
There's a father and four young children,
And Sally the eldest 's eight;
They're horribly poor—half-starving—
And they live in a shocking state.

The father gets drunk and beats them,
The mother she died last year:
There's a story about her dying
I fancy you'd like to hear.
She was one of our backward pupils,
Was Sally the eldest child—
A poor little London blossom
The alley had not defiled.

She was on at the Lane last winter—
She played in the pantomime;
A lot of our School Board children
Get on at the Christmas time.
She was one of a group of fairies,
And her wand was the wand up there—
There, in the filthy corner
Behind the broken chair.

The gilt of the star has faded,
And the tinsel's peeled away;
But once, in the glaring lime-light,
It gleamed like a jewelled spray.
A fairy's wand in a lodging
In a slum like this looks queer;
But you'll guess why they let her keep it
When you know how the wand came here.

Her mother was ill that winter,
Her father, the drunken sot,
Was spending his weekly earnings
And all that the fairy got.
The woman lay sick and moaning,
Dying by slow degrees
Of a cruel and wasting fever
That rages in dens like these.

But night after night went Sally,
Half starved, to the splendid scene
Where she waved a wand of magic
As a Liliput fairy queen.
She stood in the "Land of Shadows"
Where a demon worked his spell,
At a wave of her wand he vanished,
And the scene was changed as well.

She'd a couple of lines to utter,
Which bade the gloom give way
To the "Golden Home of Blisses
In the Land of the Shining Day."
She gazed on the limelit splendours
That grew as she waved her wand,
And she thought of the cheerless cellar
Old Drury's walls beyond.

And when, in her ragged garments,
No longer a potent fay,
She knelt by the wretched pallet
Where her dying mother lay.
She thought, as she stooped and kissed her,
And looked in the ghastly face,
Of the wand that could change a dungeon
To a sweet and lovely place.

She was only a wretched outcast,
A waif of the London slums;
It's little of truth and knowledge
To the ears of such children comes.
She fancied her wand was truly
Possessed of a magic charm,
That it punished the wicked people,
And shielded the good from harm.

Her mother grew slowly weaker,
The depth of the winter came,
And the teeth of the biting weather
Seized on the wasted frame.
And Sally, who saw her sinking,
Came home from the Lane one night
With her shawl wrapped over something,
And her face a ghostly white.

She had hidden the wand and brought it,
The wand that could do so much;
She crept to the sleeping woman,
Who moved not at her touch.
She stooped to hear her breathing,
It was, O, so faint and low;
Then, raising her wand, she waved it,
Like a fairy, to and fro.

Her well-known lines she uttered,
That bade the gloom give way
To "The Golden Home of Blisses
In the Land of Shining Day."
She murmured, "O mother, dearest,
You shall look on the splendid scene!"
While a man from the playhouse watched her
Who'd followed the fairy queen.

He thought she had stolen something,
And brought it away to sell,
He had followed her home and caught her
And then he'd a tale to tell.
He told how he watched her waving
The wand by her mother's bed,
O'er a face where the faint grey shadows
Of the last long sleep had spread.

* * * *

She's still at the school, is Sally,
And she's heard of the Realms of Light;
So she clings to the childish fancy
That entered her head that night.
She says that her poor sick mother
By her wand was charmed away
From earth to the Home of Blisses
In the Land of Eternal Day.

A BUNCH OF PRIMROSES.



AM only a faded primrose, dying for want
of air;
I and my drooping sisters lie in a garret
bare.
We were plucked from the pleasant woodland only
a week ago,
But our leaves have lost their beauty, and our heads
are bending low.

We grew in a yellow cluster under a shady tree,
In a spot where the winds came wooing straight
from the Sussex sea;
And the brisk breeze kissed us boldly as we nodded
to and fro
In the smiling April weather—only a week ago.

Only a week this morning! Ah, me! but it seems
a year
Since the only dew on our petals was a woman's
briny tear;
Since the breeze and the merry sunshine were
changed for this stifling gloom
And the soot of the smoky chimneys that robs us of
our bloom.

We grew in a nook so quiet, behind a hedge so
high;
We were hid from the peeping children who, laugh-
ing, passed us by.
But a primrose gatherer spied us—his cruel hand
came down;
We were plucked in the early morning and packed
and sent to town.

We were tossed in a busy market from grimy hand
to hand,
'Till a great rough woman took us, and hawked us
about the Strand;
Clutched in her dirty fingers our tender stalks were
tied,
And "A penny a bunch, who'll buy 'em?—fine
primroses!" she cried.

We lay on the woman's basket till a white-faced
girl came past;
There was, O, such a world of yearning in the
lingering look she cast—
Cast on the tumbled bunches—a look that seemed
to say,
"O, if I only had you!"—but she sighed and
she turned away.

She was only gone for a moment, and then she was
back again;
She'd the look on her pale, pinched features that
told of the hunger pain;
She held in her hand the penny that ought to have
bought her bread,
But she dropped it into the basket and took us
home instead.

Home—how we seemed to wither, as the light of
day grew dim,
And up to a London garret she bore us with weary
limb!
But her clasp it was kind and gentle, and there
shone a light in her eyes
That made us think for a moment we were under
our native skies.

She stole in the room on tiptoe, and "Alice," she
softly said,
"See what I've brought you, Alice!" Then a sick
girl raised her head,
And a faint voice answered, "Darling, how kind of
you to bring
The flowers I love so dearly—I've longed for them
all the spring.

"I've thought of it so often, the green bank far
away,
And the posies we used to gather—it seems but the
other day;
Lay them beside my pillow, they'll last as long
as I—
How quickly in cruel London the country blossoms
die!"

We pined in our gloomy prison, and we thought
how sweet we were
Blooming among the hedgerows out in the balmy
air,
Where we gladdened the eyes that saw us all in our
yellow pride,
And we thought how our lives were wasted as we
lay by a sick bedside.

We thought how our lives were wasted until we
grew to know
We were dear to the dying workgirl for the sake of
the long ago;
That her anguish was half forgotten as she looked
upon us and went
Back in her dreams to the woodland filled with the
primrose scent.

We primroses are dying, and so is Alice, fast;
But her sister sits beside her, watching her to the
last,
Working with swollen eyelids for the white slave's
scanty wage,
And starving to save her darling and to still the
fever's rage.

We stand on the little table beside the sick girl's
bed,
And we know by the words she murmurs that she
wanders in her head;
She stretches her hand to take us, and laughs like a
child at play—
She thinks that she sees us growing on the old bank
far away.

Forgotten the gloomy garret, the fierce and the fevered strife—
Forgotten the weary journey that is ending with her life;
The black, black night has vanished, and the weary workgirl hies
Back to her country childhood, plucking a primrose prize.

We have banished awhile her sorrow, we have brought back the sunny smile
That belongs to the children's faces in the days that are free from guile.
The Babylon roar comes floating up from the street below:
Yet she lists to the gentle plashing of a brook in its spring-tide flow.

The gurgling brook in the meadow, with its primrose-laden brim—
How thick were the yellow clusters on the bank where she sat with him!
With him who had loved and lost her, who had trampled a blossom down.
Ah, me! for the country blossoms brought to the cruel town!

Thank God for the good brave sister who found the lost one there;
Who toiled with her for the pittance that paid for that garret bare;
Who slaved when the wasted fingers grew all too weak to sew,
And hid all her troubles bravely that Alice might never know.

We have brought one country sunbeam to shine in that garret bare;
But to-morrow will see us lifeless—killed by the poisoned air.
Then the primrose dream will vanish, and Alice will ask in vain
For the poor little yellow posy that made her a child again.

* * * *

On to our faded petals there falls a scalding tear;
As we lie to-night on the bosom of her who held us dear.
We shall go to the grave together—for the work-girl lies at rest,
With a faded primrose posy clasped to her icy breast.

NELLIE'S PRAYER.

IT'S a month to-day since they brought me
The news of my darling's death;
I knew what it meant when the neighbours
Whispered under their breath;
And one good motherly creature,
Seeing my Nell at play,
Stooped down, with her eyelids streaming
And kissed her and turned away.

I knew that my Nell was an orphan
And I was a widowed wife,
That a soldier for Queen and country
Had bravely given his life;
That out on the field of battle,
Under the far-off skies,
He had thought of his absent dear ones
With the film of death on his eyes.

It was there in the evening paper,
His name was among the dead—
We had won a glorious battle,
And the enemy, beaten, fled.
Then they counted the dead and wounded,
And found him among the slain;
O God! had I known when we parted
We were never to meet again!

I couldn't believe the story—
I couldn't believe that he,
My darling—my soldier husband—
Would never come back to me.
I had thought of him night and morning;
I had passed long nights on my knees
Praying that God would bring him
Back to me over the seas.

It all came back like a vision;
I could hear the band as it played
When the regiment marched to the station,
And the noise that the people made
As they shouted "Good luck" to the soldiers,
And gave them three ringing cheers,
While the women, with ashen faces,
Walked by the side in tears.

We walked by *his* side that morning,
And Nellie was quite elate
With the band and the crowd and the cheering—
My Nellie was only eight.
She never thought of the danger;
He had tried to make her gay,
And told her to take care of mother—
He wouldn't be long away.

He held her up at the station,
Lifted her up to kiss,
And then, with her arms flung round him,
Said to her, softly, this:
"Nellie, my pet, at bed time,
When you kneel at your mother's knee
To pray to the God who loves us,
Say a wee prayer for me.

"I shall think of you in the twilight,
When the stars come out above,
And fancy I see you kneeling
With your blue eye full of love,
Breathing my name to Heaven;
And if, as the good folks say,
God hears the prayers of the children,
He'll guard me while I'm away.

"He'll guard me, and bring me safely
Back, little Nell, to you:
There's many a danger, darling,
He'll have to help me through."
And the child looked up at her father,
The tears in her pretty eyes;
There was something of shame in her manner—
Something of sad surprise.

"You needn't have asked me, daddy,
I always do that!" she said;
"Don't I pray for you and for mammy
At night when I go to bed?
God loves the little children,
And answers their prayers, they say;
I'm sure that you'll come back safely,
I'll ask in my prayers that you may."

It's only a month since they started.
We thought when the regiment went
That long ere the troops were landed
The force of the war would be spent.
And so I had taken courage,
And looked on the bright side first,
Though now and again I fretted,
And sometimes feared the worst.

They took little Nellie from me,
Took her away for a while;
How could I hear her prattle,
And watch her eager smile,
As she counted the days till daddy
Would be back from the foreign shore?
How could I tell my darling
She would see his face no more?

I was left alone with my sorrow—
Alone in my little room,
Where the evening shadows deepened
Into the twilight gloom.
I had heard the words they uttered,
I had seen his name on the list;
But I sat and peered through the darkness
As a sailor peers through the mist

I sat like a sleeper doubting
If she dreams or is wide awake,
Till the truth came on me fiercely,
And I thought that my heart would break.
As I sat in the deepening gloaming
The child came back again,
And I picked her up and kissed her
While my tears ran down like rain.

"Why are you crying, mammy?"
I only shook my head.
"It's nothing, Nellie," I whispered;
"Kiss me, and go to bed."
"Let me say my prayers, mammy—
Will you hear me say them now?"
She prayed for her absent father;
I listened, but God knows how.

She prayed to the Lord to bring him,
Safe and sound and well,
Back from the far-off country
To mother and little Nell—
Prayed *that*, with her father lying
In that far-off country dead!
"Now, father's safe till to-morrow,"
She whispered, and went to bed.

I hadn't the heart to tell her,
So night after night she prayed,
Just as she promised her father
When the last good-bye he bade.
But the prayer was a cruel dagger
To me as I sat and heard,
And my heart was stabbed to bleeding
With every childish word.

So a weary month went over,
 Till at last my nerves gave way,
And I told her to stop one evening,
 As she came to my knee to pray.
My brain was turned with sorrow,
 I was wicked and weak and wild
To speak as I spoke that evening,
 And shock the faith of a child.

She heard what I said; then, sobbing,
 Broke from my knee and fled
Up to her room, and I heard her
 Kneeling beside her bed.
She prayed in her childish fashion,
 But her words were choked with tears—
I had told her it wasn't always
 God the prayer of the children hears

She prayed that her absent father
 Might come back safe and well,
From the perils of war and battle,
 To mother and little Nell.
And, ere ever her prayer was finished,
 The door was opened wide,
And my darling rushed towards me—
 My darling who had died!

I gave one cry and I fainted,
And Nell ran down at the cry:
"They said God wouldn't hear me,"
She told him by-and-by.
When the shock of surprise was over
We knew what the miracle meant,
There'd been a mistake in the bodies,
And the news to the wrong wife sent.

There were two of his name in the regiment—
The other was killed, and when
It came to making the list out
An error was made in the men.
Yet I think as I clasp my darling,
Would he still be here to-day
Had I shaken Nell's simple tenet,
"God listens when children pray"?

IN THE SIGNAL BOX.

A STATIONMASTER'S STORY.

YES, it's a quiet station, but it suits me well enough;
I want a bit of the smooth now, for I've had my share o' rough.
This berth that the company gave me, they gave as the work was light;
I was never fit for the signals after one awful night.
I'd been in the box from a younker, and I'd never felt the strain
Of the lives at my right hand's mercy in every passing train.
One day there was something happened, and it made my nerves go queer,
And it's all through that as you find me the station-master here.

I was on at the box down yonder—that's where we
turn the mails,
And specials, and fast expresses, on to the centre
rails;
The side's for the other traffic—the luggage and
local slows.
It was rare hard work at Christmas, when double
the traffic grows.
I've been in the box down yonder nigh sixteen
hours a day,
Till my eyes grew dim and heavy, and my thoughts
went all astray;
But I've worked the points half-sleeping—and once
I slept outright,
Till the roar of the Limited woke me, and I nearly
died with fright.

Then I thought of the lives in peril, and what might
have been their fate
Had I sprung to the points that evening a tenth of
a tick too late;
And a cold and ghastly shiver ran icily through my
frame
As I fancied the public clamour, the trial, and
bitter shame.

I could see the bloody wreckage—I could see the mangled slain—
And the picture was seared for ever, blood-red, on my heated brain.
That moment my nerve was shattered, for I couldn't shut out the thought
Of the lives I held in my keeping, and the ruin that might be wrought.

That night in our little cottage, as I kissed our sleeping child,
My wife looked up from her sewing, and told me, as she smiled,
That Johnny had made his mind up—he'd be a pointsman too.
"He says when he's big, like daddy, he'll work in the box with you."
I frowned, for my heart was heavy, and my wife she saw the look;
Lord bless you! my little Alice could read me like a book.
I'd to tell her of what had happened, and I said that I must leave,
For a pointsman's arm ain't trusty when terror lurks in his sleeve.

But she cheered me up in a minute, and that night,
ere we went to sleep,
She made me give her a promise, which I swore
that I'd always keep—
It was always to do my duty. "Do that, and then,
come what will,
You'll have no worry," said Alice, "if things go
well or ill.
There's something that always tells us the thing that
we ought to do"—
My wife was a bit religious, and in with the chapel
crew.
But I knew she was talking reason, and I said to
myself, says I,
"I won't give in like a coward—it's a scare that'll
soon go by."

Now, the very next day the missus had to go to the
market town;
She'd the Christmas things to see to, and she wanted
to buy a gown.
She'd be gone for a spell, for the parly didn't come
back till eight,
And I knew, on a Christmas Eve, too, the trains
would be extra late.

So she settled to leave me Johnny, and then she could turn the key—
For she'd have some parcels to carry, and the boy would be safe with me.
He was five was our little Johnny, and quiet, and nice, and good—
He was mad to go with daddy, and I'd often promised he should.

It was noon when the missus started—her train went by my box;
She could see, as she passed my window, her darling's curly locks.
I lifted him up to mammy, and he kissed his little hand,
Then sat, like a mouse, in the corner, and thought it was fairyland.
But somehow I fell a-thinking of a scene that would not fade,
Of how I had slept on duty, until I grew afraid;
For the thought would weigh upon me, one day I might come to lie
In a felon's cell for the slaughter of those I had doomed to die.

The fit that had come upon me, like a hideous nightmare seemed,
Till I rubbed my eyes and started like a sleeper who has dreamed.
For a time the box had vanished—I'd worked like a mere machine—
My mind had been on the wander, and I'd neither heard nor seen.
With a start I thought of Johnny, and I turned the boy to seek,
Then I uttered a groan of anguish, for my lips refused to speak;
There had flashed such a scene of horror swift on my startled sight
That it curdled my blood in terror and sent my red lips white.

It was all in one awful moment—I saw that the boy was lost:
He had gone for a toy, I fancied, some child from a train had tossed;
The local was easing slowly to stop at the station here,
And the Limited Mail was coming, and I had the line to clear.

I could hear the roar of the engine, I could almost
feel its breath,
And right on the centre metals stood my boy in the
jaws of death;
On came the fierce fiend, tearing straight for the
centre line,
And the hand that must wreck or save it, O merciful
God, was mine!

'Twas a hundred lives or Johnny's. O Heaven!
what could I do?—
Up to God's ear that moment a wild, fierce question
flew—
"What shall I do, O Heaven?" and sudden and
loud and clear
On the wind came the words, "Your duty," borne
to my listening ear.
Then I set my teeth, and my breathing was fierce
and short and quick.
"My boy!" I cried, but he heard not; and then I
went blind and sick;
The hot black smoke of the engine came with a
rush before,
I turned the mail to the centre, and by it flew with
a roar.

Then I sank on my knees in horror, and hid my ashen face—
I had given my child to Heaven; his life was a hundred's grace.
Had I held my hand a moment, I had hurled the flying mail
To shatter the creeping local that stood on the other rail!
Where is my boy, my darling? O God! let me hide my eyes.
How can I look—his father—on that which there mangled lies?
That voice!—O merciful Heaven!—'tis the child's, and he calls my name!
I hear, but I cannot see him, for my eyes are filled with flame.

I knew no more that night, sir, for I fell, as I heard the boy;
The place reeled round, and I fainted—swooned with the sudden joy.
But I heard on the Christmas morning, when I woke in my own warm bed,
With Alice's arms around me, and a strange wild dream in my head,

That she'd come by the early local, being anxious about the lad,
And had seen him there on the metals, and the sight nigh drove her mad—
She had seen him just as the engine of the Limited closed my view,
And she'd leapt on the line and saved him just as the mail dashed through.

She was back in the train in a second, and both were safe and sound—
The moment they stopped at the station she ran here, and I was found
With my eyes like a madman's glaring, and my face a ghastly white :
I heard the boy, and I fainted, and I hadn't my wits that night.
Who told me to do my duty? What voice was that on the wind?
Was it fancy that brought it to me? or were there God's lips behind?
If I hadn't a-done my duty—had I ventured to disobey—
My bonny boy and his mother might have died by my hand that day.

TICKET-O'-LEAVE.

A VILLAGE DRAMA.

WHO'S getting married this morning? Some
o' the big folks? No!
Leastways, not as you'd call such as now-
adays big folks go.
It's only a common wedding—old Bradley's daughter
Eve
Is a-saying "I will" in yonder, and the bridegroom's
"Ticket-o'-Leave."

You thought 'twas a big folk's wedding because o'
the crowd, maybe;
Well, it's one as the whole o' the village has come
to the church to see.
You needn't say you're a stranger—if you wasn't
you'd know their tale,
For to find another as didn't you might search ten
mile and fail.

"Ticket-o'-Leave," did I call him? I did, sir, and all round here
"Ticket-o'-Leave" we've called him for as nigh as maybe a year;
For he came back here from a prison—this is his native place,
And that was the gibe as his neighbours flung in his haggard face.

Eve was the village beauty, with half the lads at her feet;
But she only gave 'em the chaff, sir—it was Ned as got all the wheat.
They were sweethearts trothed and plighted, for old Bradley was nothing loth—
He had kissed the girl when she told him, and promised to help them both.

But Jack, his son, was his idol—a rackety, scapegrace lad;
Though to speak e'er a word agin him was to drive the old chap mad.
He worshipped the boy—God help him!—the dearest to him on earth:
The wife of his early manhood had died in giving him birth.

To him Jack was just an angel; but over the village ale
The gossips who knew his capers could tell a different tale.
There were whispers of more than folly—of drinking bouts and of debt,
And of company Jack was keeping into which it was bad to get.

Ned heard it all at the alehouse, smoking his pipe one night,
And he struck his fist on the table, and gave it them left and right;
He said it was lies, and dared them to breathe a word 'gin the lad—
He feared it might reach the farmer; but Ned knew as the boy was bad.

Old Bradley was weak and ailing, the doctor had whispered Ned
That a sudden shock would kill him—that he held his life by a thread.
So that made Ned more than anxious to keep the slanders back
That were running rife in the village about the scapegrace Jack.

One night—I shall ne'er forget it, for it came like a thunderclap—
The news came into the village as they'd found a pedlar chap
Smothered in blood and senseless, shot and robbed on the green,
And they brought Ned back here handcuffed two constables between.

At first we couldn't believe it, not as he could ha' been the man,
But one of our chaps had caught him just as he turned and ran—
Had caught Ned there red-handed, with a gun and the pedlar's gold,
And we went in a crowd to the station, where the rest of the tale was told.

The facts agin Ned were damning. When they got the pedlar round
His wound was probed, and a bullet that fitted Ned's gun was found.
He'd been shot from behind a hedgerow, and had fallen and swooned away,
And Ned must have searched his victim and have robbed him as he lay.

They kept it back from the farmer, who had taken
at last to his bed:
Eve came, red-eyed, and told him that she'd had a
quarrel with Ned,
And he'd gone away and had left them, and p'r'aps
he wouldn't come back—
Old Bradley said he was sorry, then asked for his
boy, his Jack.

And Jack, white-faced and trembling, he crept to
his father's side,
And was scarcely away from the homestead till after
the old man died.
On the night that death crossed the threshold one
last, long, lingering look
At the face that was his dead darling's the poor old
farmer took.

As the shadows of twilight deepened the long ago
came back,
And his weak voice faintly whispered, "Lean over
and kiss me, Jack;
Let me take your kiss to Heaven, to the mother who
died for you."
And Eve sobbed out as she heard him, "Thank
God, he never knew!"

In his lonely cell a felon heard of the old man's end
In a letter his faithful sweetheart had conquered her grief to send;
And the load of his pain was lightened as he thought of what might have been
Had Jack and not he been taken that night upon Parson's Green.

Five years went over the village, and then, one mid-summer eve,
Came Ned back here as an outcast—out on his ticket-o'-leave;
And all of the people shunned him; the Bradleys had moved away,
For Jack had squandered the money in drink and in vice and play.

Poor Eve was up at the doctor's—his housekeeper, grave and staid;
There was something about her manner that made her old flames afraid.
Not one of them went a-wooing—they said that her heart was dead,
That it died on the day the judges sentenced her sweetheart Ned.

"Ticket-o'-Leave" they called him after he came back here:
God knows what he did for a living!—he must ha' been starved pretty near.
But he clung to the village somehow—got an odd job now and then;
But, whenever a farmer took him, there was grumbling among the men.

He was flouted like that for a twelvemonth. Then suddenly came a tale
That a man from out of our village had been sick in the county gaol—
Sick unto death, and, dying, he had eased his soul of a sin,
Hoping by that atonement some mercy above to win.

We knew it all on Sunday, for the parson, right out in church,
He wiped away in a moment from Ned the felon smirch.
He told us his noble story; how, following Jack that night,
He had seen him shoot at the pedlar, and rob him and take to flight.

He had seized the gun and the money from the rascal's trembling hand;
Jack fled at the sound of footsteps, and the rest you can understand.
The word that he might have spoken Ned kept to himself to save,
For the sake of the dying father, the pitiful thief and knave.

He knew that the blow would hasten the death of one who had done
More for him than a father—who had treated him as a son;
And so he suffered in silence, all through the weary years,
The felon's shame and the prison, and the merciless taunts and jeers.

Hark! there's the organ pealing. See how the crowd divides!
Room for the best of fellows!—room for the queen of brides!
Look at their happy faces! Three cheers for the faithful Eve!
And three times three and another for Ned, the "Ticket-o'-Leave"!

THE STREET TUMBLERS.

THANK the lady, Johnny, and give the money to dad;
Yes, I'm his mother, lady—don't say,
"Poor little lad!"
For he likes the tumblin' rarely—took to it from the first.
Accidents?—nothing to speak of—a bruise or two at the worst.
It's him as draws the money; he's pretty and looks so smart,
He gets many a bit o' silver, with a "Bless your little heart!"
Danger—because his father flings him up like a ball?—
He's been at the game too long, ma'am, to let our Johnny fall.

You'd sooner your child was dead, ma'am, than leading a life like this?
Come here a minute, Johnny, and give your mammy a kiss;
Look at his rosy cheeks, ma'am! look at his sturdy limbs!
Look how his dark eyes glisten! there's nothin' their brightness dims.
We live in the air and sunshine, we tramp thro' the long green lanes,
We know where to get good shelter, and we never have aches or pains.
We're happy we three together as we roam from place to place,
We should die pent up in cities, for we come of a gipsy race.

The rough and the smooth together, it isn't so hard a life.
Yes, I've had my troubles—the biggest, the year I was mother and wife.
'Twas a hard black frosty winter the year that our baby came,
The master had sprained his ankle, and hobbled along dead lame.

He'd had to give up performin', for the agony made
him shriek,
And I had a month-old baby, and illness had left
me weak.
We couldn't do much for a livin', and we weren't
the folks to beg;
The master was fond o' baby, but, Lord, how he
cursed his leg!

We wouldn't go in the workhouse, so we just kept
trampin' on,
Till the last of our little savin's hoarded for months
had gone.
The master he got no better, and I got worse and
worse,
And I watched the baby wastin' as I hadn't the
strength to nurse.
I was cross and low, and I fretted, and I'd look at
the child and think
As p'r'aps it 'ud be a mercy if the Lord 'ud let it
sink—
Sink and die and be buried before it grew to
know
What a road life is to travel when the luck's agin'
your show.

At last, with the miles of trampin', Jo's leg grew
quite inflamed,
And the doctor who saw it told him if he didn't rest
he'd be lamed;
You can fancy what that meant, lady, to him as
could lie in the street
And toss a weight up and catch it, and spin it round
with his feet.
Now we couldn't earn a copper, and at last we
wanted bread,
So we had to go to the workhouse for the sake of a
meal and bed.
We had to go to the workhouse, where they parted
man and wife,
And that was the wretchedest time, ma'am, of all
my wand'rin' life.

It's only folks like ourselves, ma'am, as can tell
what artists feels,
When they're treated like common loafers that
tramps and cadges and steals.
It seemed to us like a prison, with all them heart-
less rules,
So we started again, but often I'd stop by one o'
them pools

That lie in a quiet corner, dark and slimy and still,
And wonder what drownin' felt like—you see I was weak and ill.
I know it was bad and sinful, but my thoughts were strange and wild;
You can pity a homeless mother, who loved her ailin' child.

I hated the healthy babies I saw in their mothers' arms,
I'd look at my pale thin darlin' with a thousand wild alarms,
And think of what lay before us if the master didn't mend,
And our means of earnin' a livin' had come to a sudden end.
I envied the sturdy children when I looked at my poor wee mite.
I sometimes fancy now, ma'am, maybe as my head weren't right;
But I never envied another after a certain day,
As Providence gave me a lesson in a wonderful sort o' way.

It was through your a-sayin' you'd rather your child
was stiff and dead
Than leadin' a life like Johnny, and as put it into
my head
To tell you my bit o' story, and how as I came to
see
It's better to be contented, no matter how bad
things be.
Now look at him yonder, lady—handsome and firm
o' limb;
There isn't a mother in England as mightn't be
proud o' him.
Yet the day as I had my lesson I looked at his poor
pinched face,
And I envied a little creature as came of a high-
born race.

We'd tramped to a country village, and passin' the
village church
Sat down in the porch a minute, for Joe had begun
to lurch
And stagger a bit and murmur, for his ankle was
awful bad;
But we hadn't sat down a second when a beadle
came up like mad,

And ordered us off, and bellowed, and went nigh
black in the face;
We saw what was up directly, when a big crowd
filled the place,
And carriages full of ladies came drivin' up to the
gate;
I never saw such a christenin'—'twas the heir to a
grand estate.

We were pushed along by the people, and got
mixed up in the crowd,
And I heard 'twas a countess's baby, for the women
talked aloud.
The great folks filled the chancel—all friends of my
lord the earl's,
For this was the first boy-baby—the others had all
been girls.
I heard that one-half the county would come to that
baby-boy;
I watched as his grand nurse held him, and I saw
the mother's joy.
Then I thought of the life of pleasure, of the love
and the tender care,
Of the fortune that God had given that white-robed
baby-heir.

Then I looked at my half-starved Johnny, and thought of his hapless lot,
A lame street-tumbler's baby, by God and by man forgot.
And my heart was filled with passion as I looked at the tiny heir,
And thought, "Ah, if only Johnny had future half as fair!"
I envied my lady countess—no fear had she for her child;
My eyes were red with weepin'—her proud lips only smiled,
And I cried in my bitter anguish, "O God, if my little son
Could have such a fate as Heaven intends for that pampered one!"

So we stood in that church—two mothers—she blessed and me accursed,
And my heart was full of envy, when suddenly with a burst
Of a music loud and joyous the organ filled the place;
And stoopin', the lovely countess pressed her lips on her baby's face.

And then—it was all in a moment—I heard a sudden cry,
And a shriek from the lady-mother—then a murmur from low and high.
For the baby-heir to the title, guarded from every harm,
Lay dead in its christenin' garments—lay dead in its nurse's arm!

I rushed from the church that moment, my senses seemed to reel,
And I hugged my poor wee baby, with my hand on its heart to feel
The beatin' that seemed like music—then I clasped it to my breast
And smothered its face with kisses till I woke it from its rest.
Then its eyes looked up so sweetly, like an angel's, into mine,
And I thanked the God of Mercy for a blessing so divine.
For I had my babe—my darlin'—what matter the workhouse bed?
I could pity the noble lady, whose little child lay dead.

But our luck got round soon after, for I got better so quick
I was able to dance and juggle, and spin the hat with a stick;
And Johnny grew plump and pretty, and learnt to hold the shell,
To lisp out "Ta" for the pennies, and the master's leg got well;
And then when the boy grew bigger he took to the tumblin' so
That he learnt the tricks directly, and was quite a part of the show.
Street tumblin' ain't a fortune, but you know how I came to see
As it's better to rest contented, to be what you've got to be.



THE ROAD TO HEAVEN.

HOW is the boy this morning? Why do
you shake your head?
Ah! I can see what's happened—there's
a screen drawn round the bed.
So poor little Mike is sleeping the last long sleep
of all;
I'm sorry—but who could wonder, after that dread-
ful fall?

Let me look at him, doctor—poor little London
waif!
His frail barque's out of the tempest, and lies in
God's harbour safe;
It's better he died in the ward here, better a thou-
sand times,
Than have wandered back to the alley, with its
squalor and nameless crimes.

Too young for the slum to sully, he's gone to the wonderland
To look on the thousand marvels that he scarce could understand.
Poor little baby outcast, poor little waif of sin!
He has gone, and the pitying angels have carried the cripple in.

Didn't you know his story?—Ah, you weren't here, I believe,
When they brought the poor little fellow to the hospital, Christmas Eve.
It was I who came here with him, it was I who saw him go
Over the bridge that evening into the Thames below.

'Twas a raw cold air that evening—a biting Christmassy frost—
I was looking about for a collie—a favourite dog I'd lost.
Some ragged boys, so they told me, had been seen with one that night
In one of the bridge recesses, so I hunted left and right.

You know the stone recesses—with the long broad
bench of stone,
To many a weary outcast as welcome as monarch's
throne;
On the fiercest night you may see them, as crouched
in the dark they lie,
Like the hunted vermin, striving to hide from the
hounds in cry.

The seats that night were empty, for the morrow
was Christmas Day,
And even the outcast loafers seemed to have slunk
away;
They had found a warmer shelter—some casual
ward, maybe—
They'd manage a morning's labour for the sake of
the meat and tea.

I fancied the seats were empty, but, as I passed
along,
Out of the darkness floated the words of a Christ-
mas song,
Sung in a childish treble—'twas a boy's voice hoarse
with cold,
Quavering out the anthem of angels and harps of
gold.

I stood where the shadows hid me, and peered about until
I could see two ragged urchins, blue with the icy chill,
Cuddling close together, crouched on a big stone seat—
Two little homeless arabs, waifs of the London street.

One was singing the carol, when the other, with big round eyes—
It was Mike—looked up in wonder, and said, "Jack, when we dies
Is that the place as we goes to—that place where ye'r dressed in white?
And has golding 'arps to play on, and it's warm and jolly and bright?

"Is that what they mean by 'eaven, as the misshun coves talks about,
Where the children's always happy and nobody kicks 'em out?"
Jack nodded his head assenting, and then I listened and heard
The talk of the little arabs—listened to every word.

Jack was a Sunday scholar, so I gathered from what
he said,
But he sang in the road for a living—his father and
mother were dead;
And he had a drunken granny, who turned him into
the street—
She drank what he earned, and often he hadn't a
crust to eat.

He told little Mike of heaven in his rough untutored
way,
He made it a land of glory where the children sing
all day;
And Mike, he shivered and listened, and told *his*
tale to his friend,
How he was starved and beaten—'twas a tale one's
heart to rend.

He'd a drunken father and mother, who sent him
out to beg,
Though he'd just got over a fever, and was lame
with a withered leg;
He told how he daren't crawl homeward, because
he had begged in vain,
And his parents' brutal fury haunted his baby brain.

"I wish I could go to 'eaven," he cried, as he shook
with fright;
"If I thought as they'd only take me, why I'd go
this very night.
Which is the way to 'eaven? How d'ye get there,
Jack?"—
Jack climbed on the bridge's coping, and looked at
the water black.

"That there's *one* road to 'eaven," he said, as he
pointed down
To where the cold Thames water surged muddy and
thick and brown.
"If we was to fall in there, Mike, we'd be dead;
and right through there
Is the place where it's always sunshine, and the
angels has crowns to wear."

Mike rose and looked at the water; he peered in
the big broad stream,
Perhaps with a childish notion he might catch the
golden gleam
Of the far-off land of glory. He leaned right over
and cried—
"If them are the gates of 'eaven, how I'd like to be
inside!"

He'd stood but a moment looking—how it happened I cannot tell—
When he seemed to lose his balance, gave a short shrill cry, and fell—
Fell o'er the narrow coping, and I heard his poor head strike
With a thud on the stonework under; then splash in the Thames went Mike.

* * * *

We brought him here that evening. For help I had managed to shout—
A boat put off from the landing, and they dragged his body out;
His forehead was cut and bleeding, but a vestige of life we found;
When they brought him here he was senseless, but slowly the child came round.

I came here on Christmas morning—the ward was all bright and gay
With mistletoe, green, and holly, in honour of Christmas Day;
And the patients had clean white garments, and a few in the room out there
Had joined in a Christmas service—they were singing a Christmas air.

They were singing a Christmas carol when Mike
from his stupor woke,
And dim on his wandering senses the strange sur-
roundings broke.
Half dreamily he remembered the tale he had heard
from Jack—
The song, and the white-robed angels, the warm
bright Heaven came back.

"I'm in Heaven," he whispered faintly. "Yes,
Jack must have told me true!"
And, as he looked about him, came the kind old
surgeon through.
Mike gazed at his face a moment, put his hand to
his fevered head,
Then to the kind old doctor, "Please, are you
God?" he said.

Poor little Mike! 'twas Heaven, this hospital ward,
to him—
A heaven of warmth and comfort, till the flickering
lamp grew dim;
And he lay like a tired baby in a dreamless gentle
rest,
And now he is safe for ever where such as he are
best.

This is the day of scoffers, but who shall say that
night,
When Mike asked the road to Heaven, that Jack
didn't tell him right?
'Twas the children's Jesus pointed the way to the
kingdom come
For the poor little tired arab, the waif of a London
slum.





IN THE HARBOUR.



O for a sail this mornin'?—This way, yer honour, please.
Weather about? Lor' bless you, only a pleasant breeze.
My boat's that there in the harbour, and the man aboard's my mate.
Jump in, and I'll row you out, sir; that's her, the Crazy Kate.

Queer name for a boat, you fancy; well, so it is, maybe,
But Crazy Kate and her story's the talk o' the place, you see;
And me and my pardner knowed her—knowed her all her life—
We was both on us asked to the weddin' when she was made a wife.

Her as our boat's named arter was famous far and wide;
For years in all winds and weathers she haunted the harbour side,
With her great wild eyes a-starin' and a-strainin' across the waves,
Waitin' for what can't happen till the dead come out o' their graves.

She was married to young Ned Garling, a big brown fisher-lad;
One week a bride, and the next one a sailor's widow—and mad.
They were married one fearful winter, as widowed many a wife.
He'd a smile for all the lasses; but she loved him all her life.

A rollickin' gay young fellow, we thought her too good for him.
He'd been a bit wild and careless—but, married all taut and trim,
We thought as he'd mend his manners when he won the village prize,
And carried her off in triumph before many a rival's eyes.

But one week wed and they parted—he went with the fisher fleet—
With the men who must brave the tempest that the women and bairns may eat.
It's a rough long life o' partin's is the life o' the fisher folk,
And there's never a winter passes but some good-wife's heart is broke.

We've a sayin' among us sea folk as few on us dies in bed—
Walk through our little churchyard and read the tale of our dead—
It's mostly the bairns and the women as is restin' under the turf,
For half o' the men sleep yonder under the rollin' surf.

The night Kate lost her husband was the night o' the fearful gale—
She'd stood on the shore that mornin' and had watched the tiny sail
As it faded away in the distance—bound for the coast o' France,
And the fierce wind bore it swiftly away from her anxious glance.

The boats that had sailed that mornin' with the fleet were half a score,
And never a soul among 'em came back to the English shore.
There was wringin' o' hands and moanin', and when they spoke o' the dead
For many a long day after the women's eyes were red.

Kate heard it as soon as any—the fate of her fisher-lad—
But her eyes were wild and tearless; she went slowly and surely mad.
"He isn't drowned," she would murmur; "he will come again some day"—
And her lips shaped the self-same story as the long years crept away.

Spring, and summer, and autumn—in the fiercest winter gale,
Would Crazy Kate stand watchin' for the glint of a far-off sail;
Stand by the hour together and murmur her husband's name—
For twenty years she watched there, for the boat that never came.

She counted the years as nothin'—the shock that had sent her mad
Had left her love for ever a brave, young, handsome lad;
She thought one day she should see him, just as he said good-bye,
When he leapt in his boat and vanished where the waters touched the sky.

She was but a lass when it happened—the last time I saw her there
The first faint streaks o' silver had come in her jet-black hair;
And then a miracle happened—her mad, weird words came right,
For the fisher lad came ashore, sir, one wild and stormy night.

We were all of us watchin', waitin', for at dusk we'd heard a cry,
A far-off cry, round the headland, and strained was every eye—
Strained through the deep'nin' darkness, and a boat was ready to man—
When, all of a sudden, a woman down to the surf-line ran.

'Twas Crazy Kate. In a moment, before what she meant was known,
The boat was out in the tempest—and she was in it alone.
She was out of sight in a second—but over the sea came a sound,
The voice of a woman cryin' that her long-lost love was found.

A miracle, sir, for the woman came back through the ragin' storm,
And there in the boat beside her was lyin' a lifeless form.
She leapt to the beach and staggered, cryin', "Speak to me, husband, Ned!"
As the light of our lifted lanterns flashed on the face o' the dead.

It was him as had sailed away, sir—a miracle sure it seemed.
We looked at the lad and knowed him, and fancied we must ha' dreamed—
It was twenty years since we'd seen him—since Kate, poor soul, went mad,
But there in the boat that evenin' lay the same brown handsome lad.

Gently we took her from him—for she moaned that
he was dead—
We carried him to a cottage and we laid him on a
bed;
But Kate came pushin' her way through and she
clasped the lifeless clay,
And we hadn't the heart to hurt her, so we couldn't
tear her away.

The news of the miracle travelled, and folks came
far and near.
And the women talked of spectres—it had given
'em quite a skeer;
And the parson he came with the doctor down to
the cottage quick—
They thought as us sea-folks' fancy had played our
eyes a trick.

But the parson, who'd known Kate's husband, as
had married 'em in the church,
When he seed the dead lad's features he gave quite
a sudden lurch,
And his face was as white as linen—for a moment
it struck him dumb—
I half expected he'd tell us as the Judgment Day
was come.

The Judgment Day, when the ocean they say 'ull
give up its dead;
What else meant those unchanged features, though
twenty years had sped?
* * * * *
That night, with her arms around him, the poor
mad woman died,
And here in our village churchyard we buried 'em
side by side.

'Twas the shock, they said, as killed her—the shock
o' seein' him dead.
The story got in the papers, and far and near it
spread;
And some only half believed it—I know what
you'd say, sir; wait—
Wait till you hear the finish o' this story o' Crazy
Kate.

It was all explained one mornin' as clear as the
light o' day,
And when we knowed we were happy to think as
she'd passed away,
As she died with her arms around him, her lips on
the lips o' the dead—
Believin' the face she looked on was the face o' the
man she'd wed.

But the man she'd wed was a villain, and that she never knew—
He hadn't been drowned in the tempest; he only of all the crew
Was saved by a French ship cruising, and carried ashore, and there
Was nursed to life by a woman—a French girl, young and fair.

He fell in love with the woman—this dare-devil heartless Ned,
And married her, thinkin' the other had given him up for dead.
He was never the man—and we'd said so—for a lovin' lass like Kate;
But he mightn't ha' done what he did, sir, if he'd known of her cruel fate.

'Twas his son by the foreign woman, his image in build and face
Whose lugger the storm had driven to his father's native place—
'Twas his son who had come like a phantom out of the long ago.
On the spot where Kate had suffered God's hand struck Ned the blow.

We learnt it all from the parson when Ned came over the waves
In search o' the son he worshipped—and he found two fresh-made graves.
Dang!—what was that? Sit steady! Rowed right into you, mate!
I forgot where I was for a moment—I was tellin' the gent about Kate.



MISCELLANEOUS.

MISCELLANEOUS.

CHRISTMASSING A LA MODE DE SLUMOPOLIS.

I SAW a lady up a court that leads to Drury-lane,
She held her head between her hands, and seemed to be in pain.
She'd two black eyes, a broken nose, and bruises half a score,
She sat and moaned upon a step beside an open door.
"What's up?" I said; "you seem in grief." She answered with a sigh,
"We've been a-keepin' Christmas, sir, and Bill has blacked my eye."

"Your nose is damaged very much—you've lost a dozen teeth,
I see your head is sadly cut, your battered hat beneath;
Your face is very wan and white, excepting where it's black,
And, by the way you twist about, it's clear you've pains that rack."
"It's nothin', sir," she answered me, with quite an angry frown;
"We've been a-keepin' Christmas up, and Bill has knocked me down."

"Why don't you seek your little home, and bandage up your head,
And bathe your face, and wash yourself, and lie upon the bed?
You must be cold upon the step, in such a shocking state—
Come, come, poor soul, go home at once, and seek your lawful mate."
"I can't go home," the woman growled, "the landlord's turned us out—
We've been a-keepin' Christmas, sir—our things is up the spout."

"Well, where's your husband?" then I said; "his
place is by his wife;
He shouldn't leave you in the streets to risk your
precious life.
He's blacked your eye and cut your head, but still
he is your spouse,
And ought at least to remedy the fruits of his
carouse."
"My husband, sir," the woman sobbed, "in quod
he's got to stop,
He's been a-keepin' Christmas, sir, and jumpin' on
a slop."

"Your children, surely, where are they—you are
not quite alone?
A little boy, or little girl—come, don't sit there and
moan.
Where are your children, what of them, they can't
be drunk at least,
Or overcome, like you and Bill, with this the
Church's feast?"
"I had a child," the woman cried, "poor little
thing—it's dead—
I'd been a-keepin' Christmas, sir, and laid on it in
bed."

I left the woman with a coin—it went, no doubt, in gin—
And thought of how this time of joy is made a time of sin ;
How homes are ruined, limbs are maimed, and helpless children killed,
While prison cells and workhouse wards with maddened fools are filled.
I thought of Christ's sweet carnival to heathen rites "demeaned,"
And Christmas made the harvest-time of Drink—hell's fiercest fiend.

MIDSUMMER DAY.

"WELCOME the summer with tabor and pipe,
The time when the fruit is deliciously ripe.
O, gather the rosebuds and let us be gay,
For this, O my darling, is Midsummer Day."

So sang the poor poet; but when he uprose
And over the window-sill wobbled his nose,
The shades of his brow were decidedly gray,
For it poured and it hailed on his Midsummer Day.

He donned his goloshes and shouldered his gamp,
He packed up his oilskin that kept out the damp;
He put on his ulster and went on his way
To sing to his sweetheart of Midsummer Day.

The wind blew nor'-easters, the heavens were black;
The lightning was flashing, the thunder went crack;
The hailstones were falling the poet to flay—
He paused and he muttered, "Blow Midsummer Day!"

At noon it grew dark, and, confused by the cold,
He fell o'er a snowball some urchin had rolled.
The blast numbed his senses and helpless he lay,
A victim to sweethearts and Midsummer Day.

Next morn, when the parish authorities go
With their carts to remove the superfluous snow,
They shovel him up and they bear him away,
A frozen-out poet on Midsummer Day.

A GREAT COUNTRY.

(A PATRIOTIC SONG, BY AN ENGLISHMAN. WITH A CHORUS, BY HIS CONSCIENCE.)

THERE is no land like Albion, no people like her sons;
There's wealth, there's plenty everywhere, and swift our warm blood runs;
Our tables groan with luxuries, and welcome is our guest—

CONSCIENCE:

Though, truth to tell, you always treat the richest ones the best.

Our good Lord Mayor keeps open house, and dines
in regal state,
He feasts the lions when they come, the wealthy
and the great;
With lavish hand on foreigners we squander heaps
of gold—

CONSCIENCE:

And leave your poor in agony to perish in the cold.

We've charities we cannot count, since legion is
their name,
The largesse of our City men is trumpeted to fame;
Our hospitals are noble piles, where skill with
kindness vies—

CONSCIENCE:

There's one of them I've read about—I think they
call it Guy's.

Here justice is not bought or sold; here innocence
we guard—
No paid official, as abroad, on prisoners is hard.
No mouchard plots to ruin men, no victims justice
claims—

CONSCIENCE:

Don't mention Habron, Frost, and Smith—they
might be awkward names.

Here suff'ring finds a ready friend to answer its appeal;
Here every woman has a heart for women's woes to feel;
Here people meet to guard the rights of nigger and of Turk—

CONSCIENCE:

Here shop-girls toil twelve hours a day, and die from over-work!



LATE FOR DINNER.

POEM and prose is the life of man,
There's a little of each in our measured span,
Whether we're saint or sinner.
So thinks the lady, who sits behind
As his worship rides through the biting wind,
And gives her a bit of his lordly mind
Because they are late for dinner.

The poem was all in the long ago,
When he rode through many a mile of snow—
In the days when he sought to win her
'Twas a kiss at the end of his journey then
Now he's cross as the crossest of married men
Because—O, theme for a poet's pen!—
Because they are late for dinner.

Ah, me! how poetry fades to prose
As the eyes show signs of "the feet of crows,"
And the hair of the head grows thinner.
For one of his lady's glances soft
He has risked his neck, has his Worship, oft,
And now she thinks, as she's bumped aloft,
He's risking hers for his dinner.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING.

HE church is quaint, and carved, and olden;
The sunlight streams in wavelets golden,
This Christmas morn,
Through stained glass scenes from Bible stories,
On ancient knights whose sculptured glories
The aisle adorn.

The rays are shed in chastened splendour
On many a dead and gone defender
Of Church and Crown;
On Lancelot, the brave Crusader,
And Guy, who slew the French invader,
And saved a town.

The manor lords in line unbroken
Rest here begirt with sign and token
Of ages past;
And dames and maidens, proud and stately,
Lie here with folded hands sedately,
And eyes shut fast.

Among their tombs the sunlight lingers
Then halts between the anthem singers,
And warriors grim.
For there, 'midst many a warlike relic,
Fair children sing the song angelic,
Christ's birthday hymn.

In rev'rie wrapt, I pause and listen,
I watch the darting sunbeams glisten
On floor and wall ;
Then pass from dead to living graces,
And on the children's happy faces
In splendour fall.

This song of peace—these gentle voices,
These glad young hearts that life rejoices,
My fancy thought,
Are dearer homage to the Master
Than all the Church's foes' disaster
These dead knights wrought.

Gone are the days of gloom and error,
Love's sceptre breaks the rod of terror
In our fair isle.
And as the children sing His message
Of Peace on Earth the joyful presage,
They win God's smile.

TO A PAIR OF BOOTS.

(BY A WIFE KICKER.)



PAIR of boots! O pair of boots! my beautiful, my thick!
Why do I hang you in my hall? Is't but a madman's trick?
Nay, nay, my own, my polished ones, he's sane whose rapture flows
In limpid verse to sing the praise of soles and heels and toes.

It was with thee, my beautiful, when Jane grew cross and old,
I quick dissolved the nuptial knot without a waste of gold;
One kick from thee and silently her crusty spirit fled—
Six weeks I mourned for her in gaol and then I Nancy wed.

And when my Nancy, like her sex, grew jealous in her mind,
What crisp persuasive eloquence I used in thee to find!
If she to strike within her heart allowed suspicion's roots,
Her head was mine to strike as well—I struck with thee, O boots!

You hushed her nagging tongue at last, and sent her off to sleep—
Six weeks of mourning once again had I in gaol to keep;
Then Sally was my charming bride—poor Sal you settled soon—
You might, O boots, have let us have a longer honey-moon.

O pair of boots, the married bard on thee this verse bestows.
No "nisi" lurks between thy heels—they're "absolute" thy toes.
For discontented married men you sit in Hannen's seat—
No wife need be upon their hands who've you upon their feet.

A TRAVELLER'S TALE.

(SUGGESTED BY SOME SUMMER EXCURSIONS.)

IT was a boy—a London boy—with matches in his hand,
Who begged of me to buy a box one evening in the Strand.
I always talk to ragged boys, it's just an author's whim;
They often have a tale to tell—that's why I talked to him.

"I wants a tanner more!" he said, while counting up his coin,
"Our treat's to-morrow mornin', sir—we're goin' to Bouloin.
We has 'dejooner' board the ship, and 'deenay' on the shore,
But still one wants a bob to spend—I wants a tanner more!"

"Boulogne!" I cried; "good gracious, boy! I must have heard you wrong;
To what school, may I ask you, does your Excellence belong?"
"The ragged school, o' course!" replied that box of matches youth—
"D'ye think we ain't a-goin' there?—I'm tellin' yer the truth!

"Why, mother's in the workus, sir; last year they had their treat—
They went as far as Hamsterdam, to what they calls a *feet;*
And father, what's a imbecile, was took right up the Rhine—
That's where our treat 'll be next year—I hear as 'ow it's fine.

"My sister goes to Sunday school; her treat 'll be Mount Blank—
Six hundred on 'em goin', sir, with banners all in rank!
I wish I went to Sunday school, to have a treat like that—
I see myself a-top of it, with paper round my 'at!

"The Mission what's in Leman-street, as takes the gutter kids,
Towards their summer 'oliday 'as got no end of quids;
I hear as on a monster ship their flag will be unfurled—
They're goin' to take them gutter kids a woy'ge around the world!"

I gave the boy what coin I had, and left him with a frown,
For I was not a gutter boy, and had to stay in town.
And as that summer night in vain I tried asleep to drop,
I thought—Where will this growing taste for foreign travel stop?

LOUIS NAPOLEON.

BORN, MARCH 16, 1856; DIED, JUNE 1, 1879.

HUSH, Friend and Foe! No more his name
Shall raise a thought of France's shame
Or patriots fret,
Nor shall he shine, a wandering star,
To guide the hopes of friends afar—
That star has set!

Launched on a sunlit ocean's breast,
The zephyrs curl no wavelet's crest—
On speeds the barque.
Adrift too soon on stormy sea,
Black rise the billows on the lee:
The night grows dark.

Safe moored a while 'neath alien skies,
In friendly port the frail craft lies
With flapping sail;
Then speeds once more across the main,
And dares the billows yet again
And courts the gale.

O, loving eyes that from the shore
Scan the wild waste of waters o'er,
God help thee now!
The barque that sped long leagues away
On barbarous coasts lies wrecked to-day—
Wrecked keel and prow.

Hush, Friend and Foe! and let two lands,
Sisters in sorrow, link their hands
Across his grave.
Forget all else, O France, to-day,
Save that the exile far away
Was young and brave.

A DEADLY WEAPON.

THE Devil came up to the earth one day,
And he called on a friend, in a casual way,
For a quiet ten minutes' chatter.
The name of that friend I had best conceal,
And I do it more willingly since I feel
That really it doesn't matter.

They'd a whisky hot—I'm inclined to think
That whisky's the Fiend's particular drink—
And then they began debating
A scheme for further attacks on man—
A diabolic, infernal plan—
Which the Devil was meditating.

"I want to invent," said the Fiend, with a smile,
"A weapon that's cowardly, fierce, and vile,
For madmen and rogues to play with;
More deadly, more brutal, more cruel, more keen
Than dynamite, dagger, infernal machine,
Or anything Christians slay with.

"I want to improve on the poisoned shaft,
On the hellish weapons of heathen craft,
On Europe's most skilled invention;
It must beat the bullet, outstab the knife,
Its wound must torture while lingers life.
Is there anything you can mention?"

The friend went straight to his desk and took
A weapon that lay by his blotting-book,
And held it above him, crying:
"Here's the deadliest weapon that woundeth men!
Can the Devil improve on a poisoned pen?"
Said the Devil: "I don't mean trying."

He took up his hat, and he said "Good-bye"
With a gleam of joy in his fearful eye,
As he thought of the scribes inhuman
Who make of a gift that the gods might own
The deadliest weapon the world has known,
And stab at both man and woman.

THE STREET GALLERY.

(AS IT IS TO BE WHEN "ART" STEPS IN.)

COME, walk abroad this lovely morn, my darling, let us view
The pictures on the hoardings, love—I hear they all are new.
No more the hideous poster mars the beauty of the scene;
No more the eye offended is with flaring red and green.

Ah, here's the spot, the well-known spot, where once I used to see
A vulgar man, with brawny chest, as naked as could be;
And yonder sat a big baboon, who in a frying-pan
Surveyed himself with such a grin, you gazed at him and ran.

They've disappeared, you see, my love, and left no single trace,
But lovely pictures, framed and glazed, now fill the vacant space;
The liver pad advertisement from Leighton's magic brush
Now raises but a pleasant smile where once it raised a blush.

To see the hoardings come the folks in thousands from the West—
"The Monkey and the Frying-pan" is reckoned Millais' best;
While Orchardson, with matchless art, grips fast his laurels still—
How chaste is that design of his, "The Antibilious Pill"!

Here Tadema once more has won from fame a laurel wreath,
That girl is his who holds a brush and cleans her pearly teeth;
That's Storey's choice interior, "The Joys of Washing Day,"
The "washing powder" folks for that a monarch's ransom pay.

Sol Hart for Cooke and Maskelyne designs that
headless wretch ;
You'd be surprised, dear, if you knew the price Sol's
horrors fetch.
Burne-Jones, the Grosvenor deity, that "Hair Re-
storer" 's by—
Observe the lady's pallid cheeks and melancholy
eye.

But come away, my lady love, the crush is growing
great,
To-day the Press will come to view, to carp, to
gush, and slate.
Let's take the passing omnibus, content that we
have seen
High art on hoardings take the place of vulgar red
and green.

AT THE PIT'S MOUTH.

RISCA, JUNE 15, 1880.

A FRINGE of weeping women and a crowd,
The curious idler and the kindly neighbour,
A man or two in grief, with head low bowed;
A band of heroes stripped for gallant labour.

All these above—below a hundred men
Caught in and crushed—a hundred murdered miners,
All shapeless lying—mangled out of ken—
A ghastly subject for the graphic "liners."

We shudder for a little as we read,
 Then shake our heads, and sighing say, "How awful!"
Murmur, perchance, there seems a growing need
 To make this slaughter more or less unlawful.

For nine whole days the nation shows its grief;
 Sends a subscription—token of its sorrow.
The miner dead, we grant his wife relief.
 The miner living may be killed to-morrow.

"Death takes his toll on labours such as these;
 No human skill can ward off such disasters."
Who says so lies—Death only takes his fees
 When the door's opened to him by the masters.

O England! with your lips for aye apart
 Mouthing the Scriptures; let your faith sink deeper.
'Tis yours to check this slaughter—ask your heart.
 'Twas Cain who cried, "Am I my brother's keeper?"



ODE AND PAID TO KAHU,

THE FIGHTING CHRISTIAN OF TAPITAWA.

MY poor Kahu—my green Kahu,
Who twice five hundred heathen slew,
To make them Christians like yourself,
And not for bloodshed or for pelf,—
How could you think a savage had
The right to make the heathen glad—
To give their souls the Christian creed
On spears that made their bodies bleed?
This sort of thing is only right
In Christian chieftains who are white.

You've doubtless read, mayhap been told,
How white kings never fight for gold;
But when they filch a neighbour's land
The motive is intensely grand.
We English never fight unless
It is that we the foe may bless
By teaching them our laws and ways—
'Tis all for good that England slays.
So much the stranger's good we prize,
We kill that we may civilise.

'Tis true we carry fire and sword
'Gainst many a far-off savage horde.
'Tis true we've taken far and wide
Our neighbours' land on every side.
And when the natives we have slain
Ourselves have filled the void again.
But always has 't been understood
We did it for our neighbours' good.
We found they were a wicked race,
And killed them off by Heaven's grace.

But you, Kahu—O shocking, sad!
Your conduct is extremely bad,
To go and strew the land with dead
That Christian precepts might be spread;

The right to do such deeds you lack—
I fear, Kahu, you'll get the sack.
The journals here across the sea
Are cross with you as cross can be.
To slaughter men in Heaven's name
Is Christian England's private game.



PARLIAMENTARY ETIQUETTE.

YOU may call a Prime Minister "humbug" and "fool,"
You may toss the reporters an apple,
You may take off your waistcoat to keep yourself cool,
You may kneel as you would in a chapel.
You may sing comic songs, you may stand on your head,
You may air your most impudent notion,
You may make Mr. Speaker an apple-pie bed,
If you only conclude with a motion.

You may put up your thumb till it touches your nose,
Then spread out your delicate fingers;

You may threaten a member with beatings and blows,
And make all your epithets stingers.
You may do, you may say, what the dickens you please,
You may puff up pill, plaister, or potion;
You may even suggest that the Speaker has fleas,
If you only conclude with a motion.

THE RESIGNATION OF BISMARCK.

(A PROPHECY.)

THE sun rose red o'er all the world, the moon had screamed and flown,
The wind was hushed, the ocean still—the awful news was known.
With troops of special constables the capitals were lined,
For in the sky these words appeared, "Prince Bismarck has resigned."

Vesuvius erupted fast, the rivers burst their bounds,
There was a run on all the banks for several million pounds;
Ten thousand treaties then were drawn the potentates to bind,
And kingdoms rocked themselves to sleep, for Bismarck had resigned.

Then mothers seized their babes and fled to undiscovered spheres—
A yawning earthquake swallowed up the British House of Peers;
The Fatherland went off in pops, no pieces could they find,
And earth flew off to endless space, for Bismarck had resigned.

That night the true New Zealander arrived with carpet bag,
And on the ruins of a world he stuck his native flag;
And there alone he smokes his pipe, and whispers to the wind—
"It's very lonely here at nights, now Bismarck has resigned."

Perchance in other, happier days, when people could not read,
Less fatal the result had been of Bismarck's dreaded deed;
Perchance a weaker race of men would mutter, "Never mind!
The world may just as well go on, though Bismarck *has* resigned."



MAY.

IT is May, it is May, and the nightingale sings,
With the tic-douloureux and a cold in its head,
And a plaister of mustard on each of its wings,
And the cuckoo, alas! is confined to its bed.

It is May, it is May, and the trees were in leaf,
All dressed and awaiting their bridegroom, the sun;
But the rowdy east wind came along like a thief,
And he towzled and tumbled them every one.

It is May, it is May, and the poet with glee
Would nectar imbibe in the woods he adores;
But his drink for the moment is camomile tea,
Which the doctor informs him will open his pores.

It is May, when the primrose and violet peep
From the banks that abound in our beautiful lanes.
It is May, when a cold makes us snore in our sleep,
And the winds bring neuralgia and toothache and pains.

It is May, it is May, when the world should be fair,
The fields and the meadows be varied in hue;
But the colours most needed our health to repair
Are the draught that is black and the pill that is blue.

It is May, it is May, when the wind's in the east,
And our livers, alas! are decidedly queer.
O false month of Flora, to man and to beast
It's a *Floorer* instead that you're bringing, I fear.

AT OUR DOORS.

A WOMAN dying, starving, cold, unknown,
Crying for bread outside the workhouse late—
Crying for bread, and getting—what?—a stone—
A stone to die on at the workhouse gate.

Over the seas go ships of English gold
To clothe the savage, feed the lazy Turk;
Here lay our sister hungry in the cold—
To feed the English is not England's work!

Out on the Poor Law sham!—the heartless jest
That makes a mock of Want's despairing cry;
That in the cloak of Charity sits drest,
And robs the rich and leaves the poor to die.

O, England, blush! and now, for very shame,
Strike at this system, rotten to the core.
Until you do, 'tis yours alone the blame,
And each starved pauper dies at England's door.

FORGOTTEN.

BY A FLURRIED POINTSMAN.



SAY, you boy, from the infant school,
As barely can read or write,
Leave off a-larkin' and playin' the fool—
You must give me a hand to-night.

I know you've got to enter the trains,
But just keep a sharp look out,
For something or other has mixed my brains,
And I can't remember nowt.

I've passed the 'spress and the goods as well,
And the parly—the through and slow—
But I'm bothered, my boy, if I can tell
If there's anything else to go.

There's some trucks on the siding waiting to shunt,
And a passenger nearly due,
And I fancy there's something just in front,
By a whistle as just now blew.

There's the 10.15! and the lights are red—
I'm blest if I don't feel queer.
The line's all right, and there's nowt ahead:
You can give 'em the signal "Clear!"

I'm awfully queer in my head to-night—
A crash! eh, what does it mean?
Good God! I'd forgotten that engine quite—
And I've settled the 10.15.

THE BURIALS BILL.

["This bill involves the most serious consequences to the clergy of England, and may imperil the existence of the National Church." —*The Bishop of Lincoln in the House of Lords.*]



OME hither, little Timothy, and sit upon my knee,
And gaze upon the wilderness where Churches used to be;
And listen to the narrative prepared for little lads,
Of how the Church called National was ruined by the Rads.

You've heard about Dissenters, boy, those very wicked men,
Who wandered from the Bishop's flock and sought another pen;
They hatched a vile and wicked plot to bring the Church to grief:
It is a very woful tale—get out your handkerchief.

There was an arch-conspirator, Lord Selborne was his name—
The Radicals they put him up to play their artful game;
He framed a bill which made it law that when Dissenters die
Their most infectious bodies may among dead Churchmen lie.

Then Lincoln's Bishop, holy man! with pale and ashen face,
He wept aloud and cried "Forbear our churchyards to disgrace!
Let one Dissenter's body touch our consecrated ground,
And England's Church lies doomed for aye, and ruin spreads around."

His warning words all idly fell on irreligious ears:
The law was passed, and justified the holy Bishop's fears.
They brought a dead Dissenter's corpse within the churchyard gate;
And now look round, dear Timothy, and see the Church's fate.

The moment his polluting dust had touched our
sacred soil
Volcanic flame the churchyard filled, the earth was
on the boil.
A stream of lava swept the tombs before it in a
heap,
The lightning played about the skies, the thunder's
voice was deep.

The church, though built of brick and stone, now
trembled like a child,
And seemed to shrink as though it felt its honour
was defiled.
The walls went first, the steeple next, and then the
pulpit fell,
And all the pews went down in fear, and lay about
pellmell.

Through all the land that fatal day the churches felt
the blow,
St. Paul's Cathedral was among the very first to go;
The dead Dissenter's body wrought the mischief
prophesied,
And soon our old Established Church was ruined far
and wide

The Church of England, Timothy, is ruined now for aye,
Dissenting chapels reign supreme throughout the land to-day,
And Wordsworth, whose prophetic eye foresaw the prospect drear,
With Mother Shipton now divides the laurels of the seer.



A VALENTINE.

I STOOD at Rimmel's window, and I saw
that there were signs
That the festival approaching was the
bold St. Valentine's ;
There were lots of little Cupids in a cloud of dainty
lace,
They were podgy in the stomach, they were chubby
in the face !
And a dicky-bird I noticed, in its beak a little ring,
Just the bird to drop the present in a lady's hand
and sing.
Then I suddenly remembered that the worthy
Mrs. D.
Last year had very kindly sent a valentine to me.

So I stepped up to the counter, and a smiling maiden brought
All the best of the collection, thinking one of them I sought.
"For a sweetheart," said she, coyly, "here's a beautiful design";
'Twas a fan with painted roses, and the legend, "I am thine."
"No, it isn't for a sweetheart, but my wife," I shyly said.
Back that damsel put the boxes, and she tossed her little head,
Crying, "Oh, I beg your pardon!" while she smiled at the mistake;
"*That's* the sort of thing you want, sir—*it's the cheapest one we make.*"

AN AWFUL CHARACTER.

THERE'S a terrible character loose in our land,
Which murder his favourite game is;
All methods, apparently, come to his hand;
Be patient, and learn what his name is.
He kills little babies all over the shop,
Each day in a river one thrown is;
In the list of ill-doers he stands at the top,
And his title "a person unknown" is.

When coroners sit upon corpses galore
Of people who killed on the sly are,
The guilt of one person is well to the fore,
For our "Roberts" so terribly fly are.

The verdict is always conclusive enough,
And the facts in a nutshell all shown are;
The peelers can prove in ways ready, if rough,
These the deeds of "a person unknown" are.

He's *au fait* at the coal-cellar mystery plan,
His victims unfound may a lot be;
His methods are many to shorten life's span,
And a fool at the game he can *not* be.
He prepares for his job, and performs it in peace,
Where by nobody heard can a groan be;
What a man to defy all our clever police
Must this terrible "person unknown" be!

SWEET JULY.



IS the month of sweet July,
And the thunderstorms go by;
Waterproofs 'tis best to try,
If you'd keep your carcase dry
In the month of sweet July.

'Tis the month of sweet July,
When the maiden fair and shy
From the meadow has to fly,
For the mud is ankle high
In the month of sweet July.

'Tis the month of sweet July—
First we freeze and then we fry,
Tempest laden is the sky,
And the weather 's all awry
In the month of sweet July.

'Tis the month of sweet July,
But it might be month of Guy.
Little fogs come on the sly,
And the poets tell a lie
When they call it "sweet" July.

'Tis the month of sweet July,
But I'm weary, and I cry:
Why, O weather, tell me, why
Are you rogue of deepest dye,
Making Beauty sob and sigh,
And man look with jaundiced eye
On his damp terrestrial stye?—
Can't you swear an alibi?
For your credit's sake deny
That you're really here, July.



THE RIVER DEMON.

THE river was bright in the morning sun,
And lazily went the row-boats by;
"O, O!" quoth the Demon, "I'll have some fun,"
As he snorted, and tossed the wavelets high.

Lazily floating by sweet green banks,
The boats went past with their laughing crew;
Then the Demon was ripe for his rowdy pranks,
And he sought some ill for his hands to do.

He scattered the boats, and he tossed the stream,
Till the beautiful banks were thick with mud;
He turned to a panic Love's noonday dream,
For his demon soul was athirst for blood.

He robbed the Thames of its quiet grace,
 He filled the air with his noisome breath,
And the trembling rowers gave him place,
 For they knew that his touch was the touch of death.

Hurrah for the Demon that gaily rides
 In triumph o'er Thames's silver breast
With the stain of blood on his cruel sides—
 Hurrah! hurrah for the River Pest!

THE POETS ON THE MARRIAGE

WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER BILL.

IT comes as a boon and a blessing to men
When your missus as was disappears from your ken.

—ANONYMOUS.

When from the wife you get a parting benison,
Her sister will console you.—ALFRED TENNYSON.

When weary, worn, and nigh distraught with grief,
You mourn Maria in your handkerchief,
Rush, rush to Aunty, and obtain relief.

AN F.S.A. OF OVER 100 YEARS.

Beneath the spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands—
With Mrs. Smith it's all U P,
She's gone to other lands.

But he goes on Sunday to the church,
And hears her sister's voice;
He leaves his scruples in the lurch,
And she makes his heart rejoice.
The morning sees his suit commenced,
The evening sees it done—
Next day the Parson ties the knot,
And Pa and Aunt are one.

—LONGFELLOW.

It's a sin, says the Bishop, says he,
With her sister the wife to supplant;
But I answers him, makin' so free,
Mr. Bishop, I sez, as it *aunt*.

—COMIC JOURNAL.

O blood-bitten lip all aflame,
O Dolores and also Faustine,
O aunts of the world worried shame,
Lo your hair with its amorous sheen
Meshes man in its tangles of gold;
O aunts of the tremulous thrill,
We are pining—we long to enfold
The Deceased Wife's Fair Relative Bill.

—SWINBURNE.

THE LOST CORD.

(WITH A THOUSAND APOLOGIES.)

SEATED one day in a carriage,
I was frightened and ill at ease,
For a fellow, behaving wildly,
Was up to his drunken sprees.

I knew not if he was playing,
Or what I was doing then,
But I pulled the cord like winking
While the lunatic shrieked "Amen."

It rattled against the ceiling
As I clasped it in my palm,
Then it broke and fell on the cushion,
Where it lay in a holy calm.

It startled the next compartment,
 On the lunatic's nerves it jarred;
It reached the length of the carriage,
 But it never reached the guard.

It may be a grand invention
 At the distant guard to get;
But I've tried it in twenty cases
 And I've never succeeded yet.



A PLUMBER.

(AN EPISODE OF A RAPID THAW.)

THE dirty snow was thawing fast,
As through the London streets there past
A youth, who, mid snow, slush, and ice,
Exclaimed, "I don't care what's the price—
A Plumber!"

His brow looked mad, his eye beneath
Was fixed and fierce—he clenched his teeth.
While here and there a bell he rung,
But found not all the shops among
A Plumber.

He saw his home, he saw the light
Wall paper sopped—a gruesome sight.
He saw his dining-room afloat,
He cried, "I'll give a fi'pun note—
A Plumber!"

"O stop the leak!" his wife had said;
"The ceiling's cracking overhead.
The roaring torrent's deep and wide"—
"I'll go and fetch," he had replied,
"A Plumber."

"Pa ain't at home," the maiden said,
When to the plumber's house he sped.
He searched through London, low and high,
But nowhere could he catch or spy
A Plumber.

Next morn, a peeler on his round,
A mud-bespattered trav'ller found,
Who grasped the "Guide to Camden Town"
With hand of ice—the page turned down
At "Plumbers."

They brought a parson to his side,
He gently murmured ere he died—
"My house has floated out to sea,
I am not mad—it's not d.t.—
It's Plumbers."

THE MUFFIN BELL.

I HEARD it when a babe in arms, I heard
it when a child;
And when I caught its music sweet I
know I always smiled.
In later years its jocund sound would o'er my senses
steal,
And sweet remembrance bring me back of many a
pleasant meal.

Before mine eyes a picture rose of happy after-
noons—
When jam was brought to deck the board, and also
silver spoons;
Of crumpets piled before the fire, and muffins
smoking hot,
The hissing urn, and mother's best electro-plated
pot.

I see the merry muffin-man pass down the dark'ning street,
And still his bell can charm me, though his wares I dare not eat!
I never hear its tink-a-tink but pictures fancy sees
Of English hearths and English homes and happy English teas.

And shall they stay the muffin-bell, and stop its merry tongue,
That speaks of homely English ways alike to old and young?
With foolish laws Britannia's soul, alas! is sorely vext:
If quietly we yield the bell, they'll seize the muffins next.

No! by the teas our fathers ate, and by the muffins brown
Our mothers talked their scandal o'er and criticised the town—
No! by the crumpet, sweet and crisp, and pikelet loved so well,
Ye shall not fine our muffin-man, or stop the muffin-bell!

HIS WIFE.

THERE'S a gentleman up at the top of our street,
And he's got such a thick pair of boots on his feet,
And he's kicking a lady, and taking her life:
But we won't interfere—for the lady's his wife.

Let us stand in a crowd, as we've nothing to do,
And watch her face showing the black and the blue.
O! He's going to finish her off with a knife!
Give him plenty of room. Don't you see?—she's his wife.

What a strange thing to do! See; in fury he tries
To bite off her ears and to gouge out her eyes.
But it's merely domestic, this marital strife;
And we won't interfere between husband and wife.

Hullo! What was that? O, how shocking to see!
There's a small boy of seven destroying a tree!
Let us stop him at once, for this mischief is rife.
Here we *can* interfere—for a tree's not a wife.

COMET B, 1881.

I OPEN my window wide to-night, and I
cast my gaze on high,
Where the stars are out, and the Milky
Way, and lots of the smaller fry.
And over my head, with a fan-shaped tail, I as plain
as a pikestaff see
The comet that came in 'Eighty-one—the comet
that's known as B.

O, Comet B, with the fan-shaped tail, that came in
this year of grace,
Some wonderful thoughts have come to me, as I
gaze on your shining face.
Look well, look well, on the earth below from your
perch in the starlit sky,
For lots of things will have changed, I guess, before
you again come by.

I've read of you in the sage's page, and there astronomers say
It may be the year three thousand odd ere you come again this way;
And all the mortals who see you now will be under the green, green sod,
And even their names will have passed away in the year three thousand odd.

O, what will you see in that wondrous year when you shine upon English ground!
With the babble of what un-English race will the ancient spots resound?
Will mighty cities stretch far and wide, and the isle be black with men,
Or will ruin reign in the Old-World spot where the wild beast makes its den.

Go, comet of eighteen eighty-one! Sail on through the trackless spheres,
And come again when your journey's done, in seventeen hundred years.
Good-bye, old fellow! I wave my hand, and I give you a parting nod,
For I sha'n't be here when you come again, in the year three thousand odd.

THE PEELER IN ARMS.

IT was a gallant peeler, he was weaponed to the teeth;
His dirk was in his stocking, and his sword was in its sheath;
He'd a pistol for garrotters, and a blunderbuss as well,
And to storm an Irish alley he had also shot and shell.

He'd a cannon at the corner, and a powder magazine
Was erected for that peeler on the nearest bit of green;
He had dynamite provided when he went upon his beat,
And a stand of arms kept ready at the top of every street.

With his fierce moustaches twirling and his helmet
on his head,
Soon he filled the British public with a lively sense
of dread.
He would order orange women to "move on" in
awful tone,
And would prod them with his "baynet" if un-
willingness was shown.

If a boy was selling matches where the trams and
'buses stop,
You would hear a little pistol give a pretty little
pop;
For the arabs were the targets for the practice of
the force,
Lest when aiming at a robber they should chance
to kill a horse.

Now, this military peeler, when the snow was on
the ground,
Took the "Please to sweep your doorway" on his
early morning round.
If a householder neglected his commandment to
obey,
He would up with his revolvers and politely blaze
away.

Soon were heard the signs of mourning, and the
streets grew thin of folk—
Half the populace had perished through this "armed
policeman" joke;
Then the peelers having weapons, and no enemy to
slay,
Had a go at one another, and fought all one summer
day.

When the sun had set in glory all the ground was
strewn with gore,
And a whole unchopped policeman was a memory
of yore;
Then the populace remaining came and gathered
up the bits—
From that day no armed policemen have gone
shooting peaceful cits.

THE BOLD BAD MAN.



AM a dreadful character, in vice I go the pace;
I'll give a start to any man and win an easy race;
I've galloped helter-skelter through the catalogue of crimes,
Committed theft and perjury at least a dozen times.
I've had my fling at forgery, at felony, and fraud,
And when I go marauding, you can bet I *do* maraud;
But I never condescended, though of crime I've made a tour,
To the greatest crime in Christendom—the crime of being poor.

And that's how I keep from detection;
If you'll give it a moment's reflection
You all will agree
In this precept with me,
That it's awfully wrong to be poor.
For the rich oft may sin,
While the poor get run in,
O, it's awfully wrong to be poor.

I've been a bank director, and the bank it went to smash,
For we'd played at speculation with a lot of poor folk's cash;
I've got up little swindles in the shape of silver mines,
And sold the juice of cabbage stalks as port and sherry wines.
I've manufactured butter out of railway grease and fat,
But I go to church on Sundays, and I always smell my hat;
My balance at my banker's makes my dodges safe and sure—
The safest sort of roguery's to rob and cheat the poor.

And that's how I keep from detection;
If you'll give it a moment's reflection
You all will agree
In this precept with me,
That it's safest to swindle the poor.
The rich make a row,
But the poor folks we cow,
So it's safest to swindle the poor.

If my little game were murder, still I'd keep my fingers clean;
I could bribe my poorer brothers—monarchs do the same, I ween;
When their neighbour's land kings covet, what's about the price they pay?
Don't they send men out to rob him at a bob a head a day?
Bother *guilt* upon your conscience!—if you've gold inside your purse,
You can be as bad as I am, and, in fact, a little worse.
Wealth can make the wicked honoured, and give beauty to the boor,
But you mustn't be a villain if you happen to be poor.

And that's how I keep from detection;
If you'll give it a moment's reflection
You all will agree
In this precept with me,
That it's awfully wrong to be poor.
For the rich oft may sin,
Where the poor get run in,
O, it's awfully wrong to be poor.



THE ROSEBUDS.

"GATHER ye rosebuds while ye may,"
So sang the bard of a bygone day;
"Old time is still a-flying."
Yet "Hold your hand," I would rather cry,
If you gather the buds in passing by,
To ruin and leave them lying.

The rose's life is the sunlit land,
Its soul is crushed in your cruel hand;
In sorrow it droops and closes.
O, gather no rosebuds then, I say,
To pine for their kindred far away,
But leave them to come to roses.



THE REAL REMEDY.

FORCE is no remedy for Irish ills,
The livers there won't yield to leaden pills;
When people starve, and that tongues may not wag,
The food we stop their mouths with is a gag;
No general 's needed Ireland's wrong to right,
But just a few *left tenants* who won't fight.



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